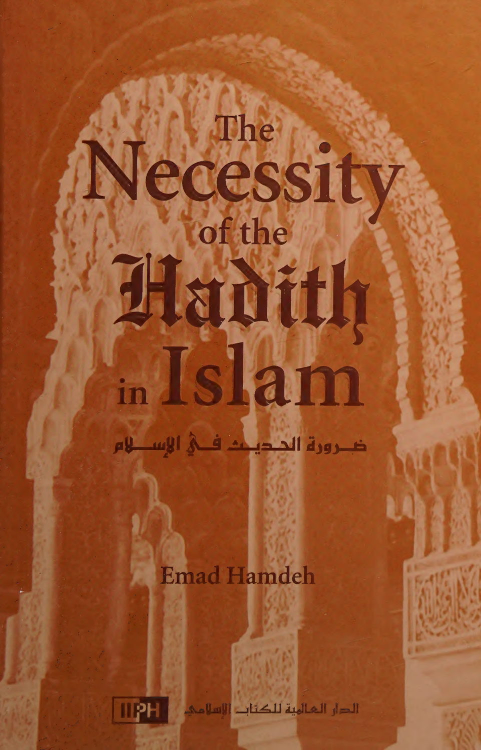

The Necessity of the Hadith in Islam

ضرورة الحديث في الإسلام

Emad Hamdeh

IIPH الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL

◆

THE NECESSITY OF THE HADITH IN ISLAM

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E-mail: editorial@iiph.com — iiph@iiph.com.sa
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Pronunciation and Transliteration Chart

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أ	short 'a', as in *cat*	a
آ - ى	longer 'a', as in *cab* (not as in *cake*)	ā
ب	/b/ as in *bell*, *rubber* and *tab*	b
ت	/t/ as in *tap*, *mustard* and *sit*	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when uninterrupted	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in *thing*, *maths* and *wealth*	th
ج	/j/ as in *jam*, *ajar* and *age*	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ḥ
خ	as in *Bach* (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh

Arabic script	**Pronunciation**	**Transliterated form**
د	/d/ as in *do*, *muddy* and *red*	d
ذ	as in *this*, *father* and *smooth*	dh
ر	/r/ as in *raw*, *arid* and *war*; may also be a rolled ‘r’, as pronounced in Spanish	r
ز	/z/ as in *zoo*, *easy* and *gaze*	z
س	/s/ as in *so*, *messy* and *grass*	s
ش	as in *ship*, *ashes* and *rush*	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /t/ farther back in the mouth	t
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing ‘the’ farther back in the mouth	ẓ
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in ‘rouge’	gh
ف	/f/ as in *fill*, *effort* and *muff*	f

Arabic script	**Pronunciation**	**Transliterated form**
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in *king*, *buckle* and *tack*	k
ل	/l/ as in *lap*, *halo*; in the word Allah, it becomes velarized as in *ball*	l
م	/m/ as in *men*, *simple* and *ram*	m
ن	/n/ as in *net*, *ant* and *can*	n
هـ - ه - ـه	/h/ as in *hat*; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in *wet* and *away*	w
و	long ‘u’, as in *boot* and *too*	ū
ي	as in *yard* and *mayo*	y
ي	long ‘e’, as in *eat*, *beef* and *see*	ī
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like ‘t’ in the Cockney English pronunciation of *butter*: *bu’er*, or the stop sound in *uh-oh!*	(omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs

Arabic script	**Pronunciation**	**Transliterated form**
أو، ◌َو	long ‘o’, as in *owe*, *boat* and *go*	au, aw
أي ، ◌َي	long ‘a’, as in *aid*, *rain* and *say*	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks *(tashkīl)*

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
◌َ fatḥah	very short ‘a’ or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
◌ِ kasrah	shorter version of ī or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
◌ُ ḍammah	shorter version of ū	u
◌ّ shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	double letter
◌ْ sukūn	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	absence of vowel

Arabic honorific symbols used in this book

(﷾) : *Subḥānahu wa Ta'āla* — "The Exalted"

(ﷺ) : *Ṣalla-Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* — "Blessings and peace be upon him"

(﵇) : *'Alayhis-salām* — "May peace be upon him"

(﵁) : *Raḍiya-Allāhu 'anhu* — "May Allah be pleased with him"

(﵂) : *Raḍiya-Allāhu 'anhā* — "May Allah be pleased with her"

About the Word Lord

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler', and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the *lord* of the mansion' or 'Lord So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God – Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah – not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

Publisher's Note

All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty, and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His Messengers and Prophets, and upon his family, his Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

Together with the Qur'an, the statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) form the basis of Islamic law – the Sharia. It is therefore appalling to note the scepticism apparent in the attitude of those (Muslims and non-Muslims) who, through false argument and ignorance, either reject the entire body of Hadith or express doubt about certain hadiths. Many well-meaning Muslims try to convince such sceptics of their error, but do not have the information or knowledge needed to refute their claims; at times, due to this lack of critical knowledge, they end up harbouring feelings of doubt themselves.

We hope this book shall prove to be a useful resource for all those who want to affirm their faith in the authenticity of the Hadith. The author has presented convincing arguments to dispel the doubts cast upon the Hadith by even the most 'scholarly' critics.

May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *āmīn*.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri
Managing Director
International Islamic Publishing House
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Dedication

To my dearest, my mom;
To my hero, my dad;
To my soul-mate, my wife;
To my miracles, my daughters.

Acknowledgments

This book could not have been written without the help and aid of Allah (ﷻ). I thank Him for guiding me to put forth a humble effort in defense of the Sunnah of His beloved Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet (ﷺ) taught that the one who does not thank people, does not thank Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, I must express my appreciation to all those who have assisted me in this effort.

First and foremost, I thank my parents for always encouraging me in my pursuit of knowledge and providing me with so much support. This work is truly a result of their blessings. I thank my dad for his generosity in innumerable ways and my mom for her endless care and love. I thank them for everything, from teaching me to take my first steps to helping me through my graduate studies. I ask Allah (ﷻ) to bless them both with the best in this life and the highest level of paradise in the hereafter.

Although I know them only through their books, I must acknowledge my immeasurable debt to the esteemed Hadith scholars, Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami and Muṣṭafā as-Sibāʿī. I ask Allah (ﷻ) to reward them on behalf of the Muslim community. I would also like to thank my teacher since adolescence, Imam Muhammad Qatanani who, despite his extremely busy schedule, is always there to answer any question I have, and is a father figure to me. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to Imam Mohamed al-Hayek for sitting with me on numerous occasions to give me feedback and review some of my translations. I thank my close friend and brother Osamah Salhia; the many long discussions we have had (and which always go by so fast) have been tremendously beneficial to me. I ask Allah to increase his knowledge and reward him.

Furthermore, I would never have been able to write this book had it not been for Dr. Ingrid Mattson's Hadith class, which exposed me to a wide array of sources and perspectives on Hadith. I also thank her for being not only an academic advisor to me, but a caring elder sister as well. In addition, I express my gratitude to Sister Balqees Mohammed for her efforts in meticulously editing this text and for her patience with me throughout the writing process. My heartfelt appreciation also goes out to Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui and Imam Mohamed Magid for their valuable insight and advice on numerous occasions.

My utmost love and appreciation go towards my beloved wife and companion, Sana Khan, for her endless support and encouragement. Had she not sacrificed much of our time together, I would not have been able to write this work. I thank her for her friendship, hard work and patience. She is the blessing in my life that has brought many other blessings. I must also thank my daughter Zayna. While writing this book, she would find time to play with me by constantly coming between me and the computer screen in which I was absorbed. She is the joy of my life and the happiness of my heart. Lastly, I would like to thank God for blessing me with another daughter, Safiya, who I pray grows up, along with her older sister, to follow in the footsteps of the greatest and noblest man, Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him.

I would also like to thank my father-in-law and mother-in-law, Saeed and Nayyar Khan, for their moral support, advice and encouragement. I cannot end without thanking my wonderful family: my sisters, Nahleh and Noha, and their wonderful kids; my elder brother Abdelmonim and younger brother Muneer, whom I always pick on but love dearly. I would also like to thank Amana Publications and the Islamic Texts Society for their kind permission to quote extensively from their published works. There are many others, unmentioned, who have helped in this endeavour, and I ask Allah (ﷻ) to reward them. Of course, any shortcomings in this work are solely mine and are no fault of the aforementioned individuals. I ask Allah (ﷻ) to purify my heart and make this deed purely and sincerely for His pleasure.

محمد بشر و ليس كالبشر
بل هو ياقوت بين الحجر

Muhammad is a human, but unlike humans,
Nay, he is a pearl among stones.

Introduction

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, the Eternal and Ever-living. We seek His help, forgiveness and guidance. No one can misguide the one whom Allah (*Subḥānahu wa Ta'ālā* – Glorified and Exalted is He) leads to the straight path. Similarly, no one can guide the one whom He allows to go astray. I bear witness and testify that Muhammad (*ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhī wa sallam* – blessings and peace be upon him) is His final messenger, sent as a mercy and guide for humankind.

In Islam, there are two main sources of knowledge: the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ), sometimes called the Hadith or Sunnah.[1] These two sources are agreed upon and used by all the Muslims, both Sunnis and Shiites. The differences stem from their varying interpretation of these sources. However, they all unanimously accept their authority. What is peculiar to Hadith deniers is that they completely reject the second source of Islamic law.

After being involved with new Muslims for a couple of years, I quickly learned about certain groups who completely reject the authority of Hadith. I searched for books in the English language that offered thorough answers to counter the attacks that were being made against Hadith, but unfortunately found very few. Those that were available did not address the issues in enough detail to assure people about the reliability of the Sunnah. As a result, I felt that it was very important that a book be written in the English language countering the attacks on the Sunnah. This book is just a preliminary research into the topic; I hope that it will open the door for further investigation into this and other anti-Hadith groups, explaining how they have emerged and issuing possible solutions to successfully counter such views.

---

[1] I have used the terms *Hadith* and *Sunnah* interchangeably; however, jurists sometimes use the word Sunnah to denote a praiseworthy act. My usage of the word 'Sunnah' refers to the corpus of Hadith or the Prophet's teachings in general.

What really ignited my interest in writing about the rejecters of Hadith was my observation of the influence of such viewpoints and misconceptions upon many Muslims, especially converts or newly-practicing Muslims. Most of those who reject Hadith have little or no grasp of the Arabic language (in which the message of Islam was revealed) and the science of Hadith, even though they may be highly educated in other fields. Through my research and discussions with groups or individuals who reject Hadith, I realised, more than ever, how astray they really are and have been all along.

The methodology of these groups implies the complete destruction of Islam, something which all Muslims must beware of and strive against. The rejection of Hadith is dangerous because if the Sunnah is disregarded, a new door is opened to interpreting the Qur'an. This is in total disregard for the teachings of the person to whom it was revealed. Without the external highlighting that the Hadith provides, each person will interpret the Qur'an according to his/her reason and desire. Therefore, each verse will have countless interpretations and the true meaning of the Qur'an will be lost and distorted.[2] As time passes, people will also begin to reject the Qur'an because the same 'unreliable' people (according to Hadith rejecters) who transmitted the Hadith have also passed down the Qur'an. This way of thinking also leads to rendering the Islamic laws null and void – the laws upon which all Muslims are in consensus, such as how to perform prayers, give *zakāh* (poor-due) and perform Hajj. They have also accused all the trustworthy narrators of the first generations of Islam of being liars and fabricators, deceiving others as well as having been deceived themselves. Their methodology seeks to destroy the foundations of Islam and deceive the uneducated Muslims, hiding behind their claim to be 'searching for the truth' or protecting Islam from fabrications.

---

[2] This will become obvious later in the book, when we discuss how rejecting Hadith has led these groups to interpret the methodology of prayer in many different ways. In reality, prayer has always been performed in the same manner by all Muslims in the history of Islam.

The science of Hadith is a vast and admirable field of knowledge; only those who look at it from a distance can doubt it. The more one studies it, the more one realises how rich and profound this science really is. Seemingly countless volumes and rooms full of books have been written on the science of Hadith. Hadith deniers reject the Hadith based on their unscholarly attacks on this well-established field of study. The immense body of research which has gone into the study of Hadith cannot be appreciated by simply reading a translation of a book of compilation of Hadith. To reach a small portion of what the Hadith scholars have attained, one must at least have mastered a comparative studies work on the Hadith such as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's[3] (d. 852 AH/ 1448 CE)[4] voluminous commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* where all the implications of the variants of the Hadith are followed scrupulously. In order to reach the level of a student of the great Hadith scholars, one must possess exceptional diligence and intellect. To surpass them, one would need much more than a superficial understanding that was gained by merely reading a translation.

---

[3] Shihāb ad-Dīn Abul Faḍl Aḥmad ibn Nūr ad-Dīn 'Alī was a great Egyptian Hadith scholar, judge, and historian. See F. Rosenthal, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Ḥadjar Al-'Askalānī. Encyclopedia of Islam.* New edition: vol. i, Leiden: E. J. Brill – Paris: Maisonneuve, M. Besson, 1960; vols ii–xiī, Suppl., Leiden: E. J. Brill – Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1965-2007, hereafter referred to as *EI2.*

[4] The year of death has been given according the the Hijrī calendar (AH, standing for 'After Hijrah') and the 'Common Era' (CE) calendar.

The views and arguments presented by the Hadith rejecters may initially sound very appealing, but when one investigates and scrutinises them, it becomes clear how deceiving they are. Their arguments are based on twisting the texts and misinterpreting the Qur'an, Hadith, Arabic language and Islamic history. Throughout Islamic history, there have existed a small number of groups or individuals who have rejected Hadith partially or completely.

The most recent of these groups are those who call themselves the Qur'anīyūn: people of the Qur'an, or Qur'an-only Muslims.[5] According to them, the Qur'an is sufficient because it explains everything; the hadiths were fabricated and written down in the third century AH. This work will look at the arguments made by this and other anti-Hadith groups, proving their illegitimacy. The counter arguments will be based on what they consider evidence, such as the Qur'an, history, reason, and the Arabic language. As shall be demonstrated, this group is not only anti-Hadith, but anti-Qur'an as well. The Qur'an commands obedience to both Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), and the only way the Messenger (ﷺ) can be obeyed after his death is through learning and following his teachings and practices, as recorded in the Hadith.

---

[5] Sometimes they refer to themselves as *Ahl al-Qur'ān* (people of the Qur'an) or *Ahl adh-Dhikr wal-Qur'ān* (people of remembrance and the Qur'an). However, it is best to refer to them as Qur'ānīyūn or Qur'anists, mainly because they are not the people of the Qur'an. The true Ahl al-Qur'ān are those who understand and abide by the Qur'an as the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions did. They mainly call themselves Ahl al-Qur'ān to emphasise their rejection of Hadith rather than their following of the Qur'an. They call themselves Qur'ānīyūn in order for people to think that by rejecting Hadith, they are applying the Qur'an. In reality, they reject both the Qur'an and the Hadith. Therefore, their calling themselves Ahl al-Qur'ān is an oxymoron.

Those who claim that they do not need the Messenger (ﷺ) because the path is clear to them are expressing an attitude of delusion. The Prophet (ﷺ) is the one whom Allah (ﷻ) graced and chose to receive the divine message. How can anyone be equal to him in understanding and applying the Qur'an? Thinking that one can do it alone without the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ) is nothing but arrogance, lest one feels like a prophet when one says 'the Qur'an and me'. Hadith rejecters are similar to those who said:

﴿... لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا ٱللَّهُ ... ﴿١١٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ١١٨)

﴿...let God speak to us!...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 118)*

Those who desire the Qur'an without the Prophet (ﷺ) act as if the Qur'an has been revealed directly to them.

﴿بَلْ يُرِيدُ كُلُّ ٱمْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ صُحُفًا مُّنَشَّرَةً ﴿٥٢﴾ ﴾ (سورة مدثر: الآية ٥٢)

﴿Nay; every one of them desires that he may be given scrolls [of revelation] spread about.﴾ *(Qur'an 74: 52)*

Those who reject the Hadith and claim to follow only the Qur'an are motivated by a hidden drive of self-admiration, thinking of themselves as equal to or above the Prophet (ﷺ) in understanding and applying the Qur'an. Our sense of reason tells us that there could be no one who is a better interpreter of the Qur'an than the one on whom it was revealed. Those who say they are going back to the Qur'an by rejecting the Sunnah clearly express their ignorance of Islam and the Qur'an itself. The greatest justice we can do to the Qur'an is following the Prophet (ﷺ), who was the means of its revelation.

The purpose of this book is to clear the doubts that Hadith rejecters attempt to place in the hearts and minds of people – doubts which, in turn, prevent them from seeing the path of the Messenger(ﷺ), his Companions, and the righteous scholars. This work is not intended to call people to turn away from the Qur'an;

rather, it is only calling them to what the Qur'an calls for, which is following the Messenger (ﷺ) and his explanation of the Qur'an.

Finally, I would like to clarify that this work is a result of my perusal of the arguments put forward against the Hadith and my discovery of the counter-arguments and replies of scholars. I have simply gathered them in one book. If credit is to go to anyone, it is to the great scholars of the Sunnah and Hadith. This humble effort is put forth with the wish and prayer that Allah (ﷻ), out of His mercy, includes me among His righteous servants. I pray that Allah (ﷻ) accepts this modest work and makes it a means of guidance for myself and others. Everything in this text that is correct is due to Allah's guidance and help, and that which is otherwise stems from my own shortcomings, ignorance, and Satan's impact and it is not part of the religion.

The translations of the Qur'an used in this book are my own. I occasionally consulted other well-known translations to check for accuracy.

Chapter One

History of Hadith Rejecters

Sects who rejected Hadith in one way or another existed in early Islamic history, and had nearly died off, resurfacing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries CE. When we look at the early sources of Islam, four main scholars stand out as defenders of the Hadith: Imam ash-Shāfi'ī[6] (d. 204 AH/ 819 CE), Ibn Qutaybah[7] (d. 276 AH/ 889 CE), al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī[8] (d. 463 AH/ 1070 CE) and Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī[9] (d. 911 AH/ 1505 CE). There are many other scholars who have written in defence of the Hadith. However, these four have addressed most of the objections in a manner that is more direct and in greater detail than all the other early sources available to us.

---

[6] Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ash-Shāfi'ī is the jurist for whom the Shāfi'ī school of Islamic law is named. See E. Chaumont, *EI2*, art. *Al-Shāfi'ī.*

[7] Ibn Qutaybah, Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh ibn Muslim was a third century theologian and Hadith scholar. See G. Lecomte, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Ḳutayba.*

[8] al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Thābit, was a great Hadith scholar, preacher, and historian. See R. Sellheim, *EI2*, art. *Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī.*

[9] Abū al-Faḍl 'Abdur Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr as-Suyūṭī was a famous Egyptian scholar and one of the most prolific authors in Islamic literature. See E. Geoffroy, *EI2*, art. *Al-Suyūṭī.*

In his *Kitāb al-Umm,* Imam ash-Shāfi'ī has mentioned only one group that rejected the Hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) altogether. Little is known about this group; in fact, we know nothing about them from their own writings. We only know what has been mentioned by Imam ash-Shāfi'ī. This group was a very minor group known only to a few scholars. Their attitude was contradictory to the teachings of the Qur'an, which requires believers to obey the laws transmitted by the Prophet (ﷺ). Imam ash-Shāfi'ī's *Risālah* and *Kitāb Jimā' al-'Ilm* both directly address those who completely reject the Hadith. Mainstream Muslim scholars recognise Imam ash-Shāfi'ī as the champion of the Sunnah. In addition to securing the status of the Sunnah as a source of law, his arguments overcame the arguments of those who completely rejected the Hadith, and after him, they soon disappeared. Nonetheless, he has not mentioned the names of his opponents,, neither as individuals nor as groups.

Scholars differ as to whom Imam ash-Shāfi'ī was debating. Shaykh Muṣṭafā as-Sibā'ī as well as Shaykh Khuḍrī have argued that they were the Mu'tazilah (Mutazilites),[10] while Imam Bakhsh has suggested they were the Khawārij (Kharijites). On the other hand, Shaykh 'Abdul Ghanī 'Abdul Khāliq argues that they were Rawāfiḍa Shiites. For the details of their arguments, refer to their works cited in this book.

M. al-Azami has pointed out that this group cannot be the Mu'tazilah for the following reasons:

1) The Mu'tazilah did not develop any legal school in the early centuries. They concentrated primarily on theological problems.

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[10] The Mu'tazilah (Mutazilites) are a school of speculative theology that appeared and grew in Baghdad and Basra in the 8th to 10th centuries CE. They are rejected by the Sunnis due to their belief that reason is more reliable than religious tradition.

2) There were many great Mu'tazilah Hadith scholars, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatādah, Sa'īd ibn Abī Arūba, 'Auf ibn Abū Jamīlah, and Maṭar ibn Ṭaḥmān. These Mu'tazilah scholars were pioneers in the field of Hadith and all belonged to the first half of the second century. Though some of the aforementioned names are disputed, most of them are authentic.[11]

Later came Ibn Qutaybah, who wrote *Ta'wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth,* a book intended to explain those hadiths that appeared problematic or contradictory to the Qur'an and other hadiths. He does not mention the names of all his opponents although they appear to be the Mu'tazilah.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī wrote *Taqyīd al-'Ilm* in defence of the practice of recording knowledge, especially Hadith. He has cited the arguments in favour of and against the practice of writing knowledge, and then given his own opinion about the sources of the arguments. About five hundred years after al-Baghdādī, a heretic from the Rawāfiḍ Shiite group appeared, claiming that the Sunnah has no authority. Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī wrote the book *Miftāḥ al-Jannah fil-iḥtijāj bis-Sunnah,* which refuted his claims, and such views quickly disappeared. As a result of these works, all sects or groups who rejected Hadith in one way or another slowly disappeared.

To summarise: a first group existed that doubted the authenticity of the Hadith altogether, until Imam ash-Shāfi'ī refuted them and his views became dominant. Next emerged the idea of rejecting individual hadiths that seemed problematic and contradictory to reason; Ibn Qutaybah refuted the advocates of this idea, and they eventually ceased their arguments. Finally, there emerged those who attacked the Hadith by claiming it was prohibited to write it down, and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī responded to them. Years went by without anyone contending against the Sunnah and Hadith, until Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭi's era. He also responded, putting an end to these attacks on the Sunnah. Until the late 19th to early 20th century CE, there had been no other objections to the Hadith as a whole. The Muslim nation had been free of such heretical views since the early days of Islam. However, they have emerged once more in recent times.

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[11] See al-Azami, M. Mustafa. *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence.* The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and The Islamic Texts Society, 1985, pp. 73-74.

Looking at the history of Hadith in the classical texts, we discover that the scholars debated the authenticity of certain hadiths, or certain types of hadiths, such as *āḥād* hadiths.[12] For instance, the Mālikī school accepted āḥād hadiths, provided they did not contradict the customs of the early community in Madinah. The Shāfi'ī School would accept an āḥād hadith but debated its authority if it was *mursal.*[13]

Some Shiites only accepted hadiths if they were narrated through their Imams[14] or from someone whom they deemed to be a Shiite; they rejected all the other hadiths because they deemed as untrustworthy.

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[12] An āḥād hadith is a hadith that has fewer than four narrators in any level of the chain. However, it might be best defined as a hadith that does not meet the conditions of *mutawātir*, which refers to hadiths that were narrated by so many trustworthy people, at all levels, that it would have been impossible for all of them to have agreed on a lie.

[13] A mursal hadith is a transmission from the successor directly from the Prophet (ﷺ) leaving out the Companion from the chain. Scholars of Hadith usually do not accept a mursal hadith, but scholars of jurisprudence do. If a Companion narrates a hadith without mentioning the Companion from whom he heard it, this is called *mursal aṣ-ṣaḥābah* (mursal of the Companions), and this type of hadith is usually accepted by all the scholars. Mursal of the Companions was usually done by the younger Companions, who transmitted the narrations that they heard from the older Companions rather than directly from the Prophet (ﷺ).

[14] In Sunni Islam, the definition of an Imam is simply the one who leads, whereas in Shiism, Imams are considered the true and rightful successors of the Prophet (ﷺ). In the Twelver and Ismā'īlī (Ismaili) Shiism, Imams are believed to possess supernatural knowledge and infallibility, as well as being considered among the family of the Prophet (ﷺ).

narrators all those whom they did not consider loyal to ‘Alī[15] (*raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhu* – may Allah be pleased with him) (d. 41 AH/661 CE). The aforementioned groups are not essentially anti-Hadith; their contentions pertained to the documentation and authentication of specific hadiths rather than the authority of the Hadith per se. This is because one is not permitted to act according to a command until it has been proven to be authentic.[16] The above differences about Hadith are far beyond the scope of this work; however, we must address the important question of whether there ever was a scholar who questioned the authority of the Sunnah or alleged that it cannot be used as evidence in any circumstance. In the history of Islam, there was never a Muslim scholar who directly or indirectly questioned the authority of the Sunnah. This demonstrates that there was always a consensus regarding the authority of the Sunnah.[17]

The fact that there was no disagreement concerning the authority of the Sunnah, and therefore a consensus about it, holds great value. In Islamic law, we find very few instances of actual consensus due to the fact that dissent is actually encouraged and even mandatory for true scholars. That is, when a scholar sees something that seems incorrect to him, it is mandatory for him to speak out about it. This support for dissent has held true for all times since the onset of Islam. The difference of opinions on matters forms an initial level of orthodoxy when it comes to the Islamic law; it demonstrates that Islamic law values diversity. Given that dissent is encouraged, it makes the consensus all the more credible and binding if there is no dissent on an issue at all.

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[15] ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) was the fourth Rightly-Guided Caliph, cousin and son in-law of the Prophet (ﷺ). See Ibn ‘Abdul Barr, Yūsuf, *Al-Istī‘āb fī Ma‘rifat al-Aṣḥāb.* Cairo: Maktaba Nahḍa Miṣr wa Maṭba‘atu-hā, n.d., pp. 1089-1134, hereafter referred to as Y. Ibn ‘Abdul Barr, *Istī‘āb.*

[16] Al-Azami (1985) *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 75.

[17] ‘Abdul Khāliq, ‘Abdul Ghanī. *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah.* Virginia: al-Ma‘had al-‘Ālamī lil-Fikr al-Islāmī, 1994, pp. 247-248.

When one peruses books of Islamic jurisprudence, one discovers that there is a debate surrounding just about every issue; however, there has never been any debate on the authority of the Qur'an or Sunnah. Thus, anyone who rejects the authority of the Sunnah is clearly adhering to unorthodox beliefs that have no roots in Islamic teachings. There are two instances that may lead one to suppose that groups or individuals who rejected the authority of the Sunnah existed in Islamic history: those addressed by Imam ash-Shāfi'ī and Imām Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī.

During the lifetime of Imam ash-Shāfi'ī, there were individuals or groups that completely rejected the authenticity of all the Hadith. However, they did not dispute their authority.[18] There is nothing in the speech of Imam ash-Shāfi'ī or in that of his opponents which indicates that some people rejected the authority of the Sunnah. Instead, they rejected certain hadiths (not the authority of the Sunnah) because they alleged that they could not be entirely certain that the Prophet (ﷺ) had really said what was being narrated. Therefore, they rejected the authority of all the Hadith because they did not trust the manner in which they had been transmitted, not because they rejected the authority of the Prophet's sayings.[19] Had they been absolutely certain that it was indeed the speech of the Prophet (ﷺ), they would have accepted it.

One may argue that Imam ash-Shāfi'i's opponents must have rejected the authority of the Sunnah; otherwise, why would he have mentioned verses throughout the debate which prove that the Sunnah is authoritative? Imam ash-Shāfi'ī set out to establish that since the Sunnah is authoritative and not limited to the people living during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), it does not make sense that Allah (ﷻ) would make it compulsory for the Muslims after the era of the Prophet (ﷺ) to follow the Sunnah, yet not provide them a means to follow it. The only way to follow the Sunnah is through the various narrations of Hadith.[20]

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[18] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, 247-248.

[19] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, 220-222.

[20] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, 220-222.

Nevertheless, at the end of the debate, both Imam ash-Shāfi'ī and his opponents agreed on the authenticity and authority of the Hadith.

One might also argue that the work of Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Jannah fil-Iḥtijāj bis-Sunnah*, is evidence that there existed Muslims who rejected the authority of the Sunnah. This is because his book is addressed to an extreme Shiite group, the Rawāfiḍ, who rejected the authority of the Sunnah in general. He begins his book by describing those whom he is addressing:[21]

> Know may Allah have mercy on you that the one who rejects the authority of ḥadīth of the Prophet peace be upon him, whether it is one of his sayings or deeds, that meets its conditions in the science,[22] such a person has disbelieved and left the fold of Islam, and will be gathered with the Jews and Christians, or with whomever of the disbelievers Allah wishes to gather him with. Imām al-Shāfi'ī, may Allah be pleased with him, once narrated a ḥadīth and said it was authentic. Someone said to him, do you agree with it[23] O father of 'Abdullah? He got angry and replied: Oh you, do I look like a Christian? Do I look like I am walking out of a Church? Do you see a *zunnār*[24] around my waist? I narrate a ḥadīth from the Prophet peace be upon him and I do not agree with it?!

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[21] The following is the translation of the original text; it has not been altered in any way. Similarly, none of the quoted texts in this book has been edited for language and clarity. (Editor)

[22] Here, he means the science of Hadith.

[23] Here, the words used are *Ataqūlu bihī* literally translated as: "Do you say according to it?" However, what it means in this context is: "Do you, as a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, accept or act in accordance with this hadith?", since a jurist considers many other factors before applying a hadith, such as its authenticity, the context in which it was said, or whether it is a general statement or meant for a specific situation et cetera.

[24] A *zunnār* is a belt that Christians of the time wore; it was known to be a symbol that was exclusively for Christians, such as the cross is today.

This misguided opinion originated from the *zanādiqa*,[25] a group of the extreme Rawāfiḍ; they deny the sunnah has any authority, and limit it (authority) to the Qur'ān, and they do this for different reasons: a group of them believed that prophet-hood belonged to 'Alī, and that Gabriel, peace be upon him, made a mistake and came to the master of the Messengers,[26] peace be upon him. Allah is Highly Exalted from what the unjust say. Others among them believe that Muhammad peace be upon him is the Messenger, but they said: the caliphate was meant for 'Alī and when the companions gave it to Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with all of them, instead of 'Alī, these deceived people – may Allah curse them – said that the companions disbelieved when they usurped the right from the one who owns it. And they, may Allah curse them, also considered 'Alī, may Allah be pleased with him, a disbeliever because he did not ask for his right. Based on that, they rejected all aḥādīth, because according to their claim they are narrations from disbelievers. So, verily we belong to Allah and to Him we return. And I would have never mentioned these views had it not been necessary; in order to show the origin of these false beliefs which people were free from in the previous generations.[27]

Hence, Imam as-Suyūṭī did not state that there was any difference when it came to the authority of the Sunnah, except among two groups of the extreme Rawāfiḍ. As for the second group, they do not concern us because they dismissed hadiths based on their method of transmission, not because they believed that the Prophet's sayings are not authoritative; in other words, they challenged the *authenticity* of Hadiths, not their authority. They denied hadiths because they alleged that the Companions had disbelieved and, as a result, were unreliable narrators. Concerning the first group, not only did they deny the authority of the Sunnah, but they are without doubt not even Muslims because they deny the message of Muhammad (ﷺ).

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[25] *Zindīq*, singular of *zanādiqa*, usually refers to someone who professes Islam externally, but works to destroy it from the inside.

[26] A title given to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

[27] As-Suyūṭī, Jalāl ad-Dīn. *Miftāḥ al-Jannah fil-Iḥtijāj bis-Sunnah*. Cairo: Quṣay Muḥib ad-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, 1974, pp. 3-4.

In his book *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, Ibn Ḥazm[28] (d. 456 AH/ 1064 CE) also attributes rejection of the Sunnah to the extreme Rawāfiḍ. He states: "Those who believed this were some of the extreme Rawāfiḍ, about whom the Ummah is in consensus concerning their disbelief."[29] They allege that the Prophet (ﷺ) received revelation due to a mistake, claiming that Gabriel (*'alayhī as-salām* – peace be upon him) erred by delivering it to him instead of 'Alī (ؓ). The fact that this group denies the authority of the Sunnah is of no value. It is just like any non-Muslim denying the authority of the Sunnah; furthermore, it does not matter if such groups deny even the authority of the Qur'an. So, even if we assume that Imam ash-Shāfi'ī's opponents were denying the authority of the Sunnah, they probably belonged to this group of the Rawāfiḍ, who essentially were not Muslim. They could also have belonged to the group that denied the hadiths simply because of the manner of their transmission.

Ultimately, throughout Islamic history, there never existed a group of true Muslims or any individual scholar who rejected or even doubted the authority of the Sunnah. There were, from time to time, groups or individuals that rejected the Hadith because they considered the method of transmission unreliable. However, they never denied the authority of the Prophet's statements. Nevertheless, as Imam ash-Shāfi'ī rightly argues, Allah (ﷻ) would not ask us to follow something without providing the means to do it. It was not until the late 19th to early 20th century that certain sects emerged which not only completely rejected the Hadith, but rejected the authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) as well.

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[28] Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa'īd was an Andalusian poet, historian, jurist and theologian. One of the greatest thinkers of Islamic civilization, he codified the Ẓāhirī doctrines and applied this method to all the Qur'anic sciences. See R. Arnaldez, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Ḥazm*.

[29] Ibn Ḥazm, 'Alī ibn Aḥmad. *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-'Āṣimah, 1968, p. 254.

Chapter Two

Hadith Rejecters and Sceptics in the Modern Period

Beginning in the late 19th century, and continuing into the early 20th century CE, factions that rejected Hadith began to appear. Most of them arose from the Indian subcontinent although this menace did briefly flare up in the Arab world as well. As pointed out previously, these groups were not the first to reject the Hadith. There had existed heretical sects in the past that had harboured somewhat similar views about the Hadith, despite the fact that those who advocate such views in the modern era rarely acknowledge or even know about the earliest roots of their position. Today, as in the past, mainstream Muslims accept Hadith and recognise that obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) after his death can only be accomplished by following the Hadith. Following is a brief biography of some of the more prominent modern Hadith rejecters.

Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898 CE)

The first challenge to the Sunnah in the modern period was by an Indian, Syed Ahmad Khan, who eventually rejected all the Hadith as unreliable. His father held a high position with the East India

Company. Syed Ahmad Khan followed his father into the Company and spent the early part of his career with the Company in Agra, which was a major hub for Christian missionary work. There, he became personally acquainted with several missionaries, most importantly William Muir, and was exposed to western scholarly methods through the influence of Alois Sprenger, who was the principal of Delhī College at the time.[30]

Syed Ahmad Khan was the leading figure in India's Islamic modernism movement. His way of interpreting the Qur'an was exclusively based on his personal reason. His ideas were developed in relation to the discourse of the missionaries, British public servants, and those who were trying to westernise India. He accepted the western rationalist model, and his speculative system highlights features that are obviously influenced by Unitarianism.[31] He also did not concede that the Bible had been changed or tampered with. In addition, he subscribed to the European paradigm of society that was widespread in the 19th century – that societies were ranked in terms of technological progress and the modernity of their social organisations.[32] The theology Syed Ahmad Khan was advocating was not an outcome of criticism of orthodoxy; instead, his emphasis was on how Islam can be interpreted in order to accommodate rationalist thinking and modern discoveries. He explained the Qur'an using only the Qur'an itself and his sense of reason, not by referring to any hadiths or the opinions of classical Muslim scholars.

The fact that Syed Ahmad Khan did not consider the Bible to have been tampered with is quite interesting. While little is known about those who compiled the Bible, the sayings attributed to Jesus (عليه السلام)

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[30] Brown, Daniel. *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought.* UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996. p. 34.

[31] Unitarianism is based on a belief in one God, thus rejecting the idea of a trinity. (Editor)

[32] Moaddel, Mansoor. "Conditions for Ideological Production: The Origins of Islamic Modernism in India, Egypt and Iran." *Theory and Society* 30, no. 5 (2001), pp. 683-684.

have no recorded chains of narrations comparable to the hadiths of Islam, and they were written about two to four hundred years after Jesus, whereas the hadiths were recorded during the life of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Yet he claimed that hadiths are completely fabricated, even though details are known about every narrator, and they contain chains of narrations which one can study to critique their authenticity. Like the missionaries who surrounded him, it seems that he applied ruthless standards when judging the Hadith, but completely different standards when judging the authenticity of the Bible.

Syed Ahmad Khan's views and methodology were clearly influenced by the missionaries and the ideas typical of Orientalists. Missionaries began attacking Islam, labelling it backwards, irrational and contradictory to science. In response, Syed Ahmad Khan rejected all the Hadith and opinions of traditional Muslim scholars and used only his sense of reason to interpret the Qur'an. He needed to do this in order to interpret the Qur'an so that it met the standards of the missionaries and Westerners of what is rational, modern and scientific. Had he accepted the Hadith and the opinions of orthodox Muslim scholars, he would have been limited to interpreting the Qur'an according to the rules laid down by the early Muslim generations. In following his intellectual inclinations when interpreting the Qur'an, he rejected the sayings of the Messenger (ﷺ), preferring his own.

Syed Ahmad Khan was not fighting to prevent Muslims from losing their faith in the name of modern sciences. However, he was concerned that they rejected modern science and so-called 'progress' in the name of their faith. His mission was to dilute the foreign nature of the West in Muslim societies.

In an attempt to accomplish his mission, he issued a journal titled *Tahzīb al-Akhlāq*, in which he advocated Western manners, habits and morality, and even wrote a partial commentary on the Bible. He believed that Muslims must be completely loyal to British rule because he saw the British as invincible.

The British government prized this and, thus, helped him open the Aligarh Muslim College. Its purpose was to spread Western culture and science along with the Islamic religion, whereby Muslims would not mind being ruled by others. Syed Ahmad Khan was not trying to spread Islam. Indeed, he was trying to spread Western culture and thought.

Instead of using the Hadith to judge modern science and progress, he used science and modern progress to judge the Hadith, making the former the ultimate authority instead of the latter. He made a distinction between religion and law, stating that the two are completely separate – yet another reason that led him to reject Hadith.[33] Rejecting Hadith in turn removes a large portion of the Islamic law. It is difficult to understand how he could separate law and religion when the Qur'an is full of laws that are meant to be obeyed.

Syed Ahmad Khan was a product of missionaries, Western culture and British rule. Therefore, not surprisingly, we find that he was the first to reject Hadith in the modern era. Others who followed him were also affected by the Orientalists, though perhaps not as much. Syed Ahmad Khan opened the gate to complete rejection of the Hadith in the modern period, having paved the way for all those who would come after him.

Chiragh Alī (d. 1895 CE)

Chiragh Alī was an early well-known modernist who was a close friend of Syed Ahmad Khan. Alī rejected all the sources of Islamic law and sought to reinterpret Islam according to rationalism and science. He rejected *ijmā'*[34] as a source of Islamic law and limited the sources to the Qur'an, arguing that the Prophet (ﷺ) had advised that his nation revise their laws according to the needs of the time. Alī accepted the criticism of Hadith by Orientalists such as Muir and Goldziher and felt that the Hadith corpus was unreliable. Interestingly, it was Ali's desire to defend Islam that led him to Hadith rejection.

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[33] Rahman, F. "Muslim Modernism in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 21, 1958, pp. 82-84.

[34] *Ijmā'*, or consensus, occurs when all the scholars agree on a particular thing and it becomes binding under the Islamic law.

He was disturbed by the claims of Christian missionaries and Orientalists that Islam was full of irrational beliefs. Rejecting Hadith was necessary, he thought, in order to save the rest of the message of Islam. Without Hadith, Alī could offer different interpretations of Islamic concepts that Orientalists and missionaries viewed as backwards.

For instance, the *jinn* are a group of creatures which the Qur'an describes as being composed of fire. Hadiths confirm the Qur'an's description and add further details, such as the fact that the jinn share the earth with humans. Alī, uncomfortable with the concept of demon-like creatures among us, rejected the hadiths on this topic in an attempt to gloss over the Qur'an's description. He instead tried to argue that the jinn were simply another Semitic tribe.

Ali's ideas were carried on by what became known as the Ahl al-Qur'an (literally, the 'People of the Qur'an') movement, whose followers viewed the Hadith as an embarrassment to Islam and argued that Islamic law and creed could be derived from the Qur'an alone.[35]

Abdullah Chakralawi (d. 1914 CE)

After Syed Ahmad Khan came Abdullah Chakralawi, the leader of the Quranists (Qur'ānīyūn). Chakralawi was from Lahore, Pakistan. He was the first to call people to the new sect, whose adherents called themselves 'Ahl al-Qur'an'. He rejected all the Hadith and wrote many works presenting his views. Abdullah was born in Chakrala, a city in the Punjab province of Pakistan. It is interesting to note that the two groups who sought to destroy Islam from its foundation originated from this region: the Ahmadiyyah[36] and the Quranists. While Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the first group, claimed in 1900 that he was a prophet, Abdullah Chakralawi began the Quranist movement in 1902.

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[35] Brown, Jonathan A. C. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World.* England: Oneworld Publications, 2009, p. 244.

Abdullah first studied at the hands of his father, then attended a local school before finally moving from Punjab to Delhī to study Hadith under Syed Mian Nazir Hussain, a prominent Hadith scholar of the time. Insightfully, looking at Abdullah, his teacher feared that he would be the one mentioned in the following hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ):

« Let me not find one of you reclining on his couch, and when confronted with an order, permission, or prohibition from me, say: I do not know [whether it is obligatory or not]; we will follow only what we find in the Book of God. » (An authentic hadith recorded by Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhi)

Abdullah then returned home and began to teach what he had learned. He began to stray from mainstream Islam when a cousin of his complained to him that the Hadith contained difficult commands and were causing him hardship in his life. It was then that Abdullah made his famous statement: "This is the Qur'an that was revealed from Allah to Muhammad (ﷺ), and anything that goes against it is not revelation."[37]

Abdullah believed that the Qur'an itself was a sufficient source and could be followed exclusively without the need for any other source. He stated that the Prophet (ﷺ) could only receive one form of revelation, and that was the Qur'an itself. According to his viewpoint, all other statements and actions of the Prophet (ﷺ) were only relevant to his human life. The Qur'an comprehensively covers all the basic injunctions for Muslims, and leaves them free to exercise their own judgement in other matters. It is the only record of divine wisdom and the only source of the Prophet's teachings. Accordingly, it supersedes and makes redundant the entire corpus of Hadith.[38]

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[36] Sometimes also known as the Qādiyānis, they are an organised religious community who follow Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. They are considered to be outside the fold of Islam by most mainstream Muslims.

[37] Bakhsh, Khādim Ḥusayn Ilāhī. *Al-Qur'āniyūn wa Shubahātuhum Ḥawl as-Sunnah.* Ṭā'if, Saudi Arabia: Maktabat aṣ-Ṣiddīq, 1989, pp. 25-27.

Nonetheless, without Hadith, anyone can interpret the Qur`an according to their own whims and desires. Chakralawi's belief that the Qur'an leaves Muslims free to exercise their own judgement in other matters is very detrimental. This means that apart from some basic rules, Muslims can do whatever they want. Perhaps Chakralawi, Syed Ahmad Khan and their ilk did not want to deal with the rules and regulations found in the Hadith, and they therefore denied them in order to interpret the Qur'an as they wished.

He began writing works against the Hadith, almost all of which were in Urdu, even though he knew Arabic. When quoting the Qur'anic verses in his books, he frequently and freely added his own interpretative comments to the translation. He did this although he had claimed that the Qur'an contains all the necessary details, even the number of prayers and the number of units in each one. Thus, when asked for evidence from the Qur'an, he provided translated verses with his own commentaries in parentheses. His works are particularly hard to find in the market today or in libraries, perhaps as a result of mainstream Muslims' opposition to his views. Another reason may be that in his works, he belittles early Muslim scholars and the knowledge inherited from them. Consequently, he did not have many followers and had a bad reputation among the people.[39] The scholars of his time declared him to be a disbeliever and outside the fold of Islam. The journal *Ishā'at as-Sunnah* published the signatures of many scholars from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who pronounced him a disbeliever. He eventually became ill and died in 1914.[40]

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[38] Ahmad, Aziz. *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964.* UK: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 38.

[39] Aziz, *Islamic Modernism*, p. 38.

[40] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, p. 32.

Khwaja Ahmed Din Amritsarī (d. 1936 CE)

Another originator and supporter of the Quranist movement, Khwaja Ahmed Din Amritsarī was born in 1861 CE in the town of Amritsar, India. He was influenced by the teachings of Syed Ahmad Khan. He did not follow his exact footsteps due to the harsh criticism Syed Ahmad Khan received from the scholars of his time; he preferred to be more cautious and secretive. In 1902, when Chakralawi publicised his views on Hadith, Khwaja Ahmed immediately contacted him and began visiting him regularly. They would meet to share ideas and debate, each influencing the other.[41]

When Chakralawi published his book on prayer according to the Qur'an alone, Khwaja Ahmed Din paid him a special visit and advised him not to publicise his views at that point in time. As the time for the '*aṣr* prayer approached during the visit, Khwaja Ahmed Din led Chakralawi in the prayer and performed it in accordance with Chakralawi's book. When the prayer concluded, Chakralawi asked Khwaja how he could object to the book, yet pray in accordance with it. Khwaja responded by saying that he did not necessarily disagree with it, but it was not permissible to ignite disunity among the Muslims, particularly in the act of prayer.[42]

Khwaja also paid numerous visits to the well-known poet, Allama Muhammad Iqbal[43] (d. 1938 CE). The two would have discussions on religious matters and try to reach conclusions as to what was in agreement with the Islamic teachings. Because of his numerous visits to Iqbal, people became suspicious that Muhammad Iqbal had fallen prey to the Quranists. This suspicion only grew when Iqbal wrote a poem criticising some Muslims for turning to sources other than the Qur'an. However, these suspicions proved baseless. Muhammad Iqbal used to acquire wisdom from any source that he discovered.

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[41] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuḥum*, pp. 33-35.

[42] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuḥum*, p. 35.

[43] Famous Persian and Urdu language poet.

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained in one hadith: « Wisdom is the lost property of a believer, and he has more right to it anywhere he finds it. » (A reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah)

Rather than being influenced by the anti-Hadith views that Khwaja Ahmed possessed, Muhammad Iqbal benefitted from those visits. The indication of this is the fact that he wrote many poems that confirm his belief in the Sunnah.[44]

Aside from Chakralawi and Iqbal, Khwaja debated and met with many groups and influential leaders who held views and beliefs different from his own. He met with various Hadith scholars. He also visited Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the leader of the Qādiyānis, and Christians, without being influenced by any of them. He tried to avoid strife concerning those he disagreed with, debating with them in a kind manner. That is why he was able to meet many of the leaders of his time and attend the gatherings of many groups with whom he disagreed.[45] Although Khwaja had an excellent character, his teachings were just as deviant as those of Abdullah Chakralawi and Syed Ahmad Khan.

In 1926, Khwaja Ahmed Din decided to start his own group in Amritsar, which he named *Ummah Muslimah* (Muslim Nation). Ummah Muslimah began publishing their journal titled *Balāgh*. This group worked very hard to spread their teachings and publications, to the extent that many of the members paid from their own pockets to publish books and mail them out to every address they could get their hands on. This, along with Khwaja Ahmed Din's fine character, allowed them to spread their teachings rapidly. Many influential figures in India joined Ummah Muslimah, each of them playing a key role in spreading Khwaja's teachings and adding their own ideas as well. Ummah Muslimah has many different ideas and groups within it, and each group can be considered a school of its own. Khwaja Ahmed Din's teachings were similar to those of Chakralawi – he claimed to adhere only to the Qur'an, while rejecting the Sunnah.

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[44] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum,* p. 36.

[45] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, p. 37.

In 1933, Khwaja's wife died, and he passed away three years later in 1936, after having been sick and bedridden for three months.[46]

Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (d. 1986 CE)

Ghulam Ahmad Parwez was born in 1903, in the town of Butana, now in the Indian part of Punjab. He received his religious education from his grandfather Hakim Maulvī Rahim Bakhsh, who was a scholar and well-known Sufī of the Chishtia Nizamia. From a young age, his grandfather began teaching him the secrets of mysticism; he soon rejected all of his grandfather's teachings and became their open opponent. He also came to deny the authority of the Hadith and Sunnah. In 1938, he established an institute to spread his teachings, called *Ṭulū' al-Islām*, which is until today one of the most active anti-Hadith institutions in the world. Parwez had many debates with the eminent Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, the two becoming well-known rivals. Scholars took a strong stance against *Ṭulū' al-Islām* and in 1961, the beliefs of Parwez were researched by the scholars of Karachī, Pakistan, and they declared him a disbeliever. His beliefs were laid out and presented to different scholars around the world; as a result, more than a thousand scholars from Pakistan, India and numerous countries in the Middle East signed a religious decree declaring Parwez a disbeliever and outside the fold of Islam. He became sick and died in 1986.[47]

Today, many of the writers of *Ummah Muslimah* and *Ahl adh-Dhikr wal-Qur'an* (The people of the remembrance and the Qur'an) have joined *Ṭulū' al-Islām*.

Rashad Khalifa (d. 1990 CE)

A bio-chemist born in Egypt, Rashad Khalifa immigrated to America in 1959, taking up residence in Tucson, Arizona. Khalifa founded the Hadith-rejecting group called United Submitters

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[46] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, pp. 37-39.

[47] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, pp. 47-55.

International (USI). Khalifa began researching the number of times certain words and letters appeared in the Qur'an, and he discovered the alleged miracle of the number 19. However, later research showed that his calculations were wrong. In order to keep the counts of certain words, he rejected two verses from the Qur'an; in addition, he would count the letters incorrectly and inconsistently. For example, he would sometimes count the *alif* as one letter and at other times considered it two: *alif* and *hamzah*.[48] Khalifa later claimed that he was a messenger of Allah (ﷻ), and the Submitters still believe this today.

In 1986, a man named Edip Yuksel, a Turkish immigrant to America, met Khalifa and adopted his methodology. Although he still rejected the Hadith, Yuksel later left USI, criticising them for being loyal to Rashad Khalifa instead of to Allah (ﷻ). In Rashad Khalifa's translation of the Qur'an, many gross mistranslations and misinterpretations can be found.

Today the United Submitters have the strongest influence in the West, as compared to other anti-Hadith groups. They have an active website, and unfortunately, some new Muslims – or those with little knowledge of Islam – visit and fall prey to their weak yet deceptive arguments against Hadith. While browsing through the content on their website, I found many false and superficial claims against Hadith that may appear convincing. Many of these claims will be dealt with and refuted throughout the course of this book.

It should be noted that this group bases its beliefs on nothing other than the mistranslation and misinterpretation of Qur'anic texts. In their version of the Islamic testimony of faith, they only bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah (ﷻ), leaving out the second part about bearing witness that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His Messenger. They claim that it is *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) to always mention the name of Muhammad (ﷺ) in addition to the mention of Allah (ﷻ). However, they do not recognise that on multiple occasions, the Qur'an itself commands us to 'obey Allah' along with the command 'obey the Messenger'. Because the two are indissolubly linked together, according to their reasoning, it naturally follows that the Qur'an calls people towards shirk. Once more, it seems that they have a problem with Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) himself, as if he is an obstacle in Mr. Khalifa's claim of being a messenger.

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[48] For a detailed refutation and exposure of Khalifa's method in discovering the alleged miracle, see Philips, Bilal. *The Qur'an's Numerical Miracle: Hoax and Heresy.* Riyadh: Al Furqan Publications, 1987.

On January 31, 1990, Khalifa was stabbed to death at a mosque in Tucson, Arizona. His murderer was never caught.[49]

Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi (d. 1920 CE)

Although the Hadith rejection movement flourished in the Indian subcontinent, it did briefly appear in the Arab world. In a 1906 issue of the famous Islamic reformist journal *al-Manār*, an Egyptian physician named Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi wrote an article titled *al-Islām Huwa al-Qur'ān Waḥdahu* (Islam is the Qur'an Alone), in which he argued that Islam was meant to be understood using the Qur'an and nothing else. He argued that the Prophet (ﷺ) never explicitly ordered the recording of his sayings and that they had not been reliably preserved for over a century after the Prophet's death. He stated that Allah (ﷻ) could not allow His religion to be based on such unreliable sources. According to him, the Sunnah was only for the first generation of Muslims; the later Muslims were expected to adapt their law to circumstances, according to principles found in the Qur'an. In his opinion, the Hadith had been recorded too late to catch many of the forgeries found in them. Consequently, many of the hadith attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) were actually *isrā'īliyāt*.[50]

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[49] Islam does not condone such extra-judicial killings.

[50] *Isrā'īliyāt* are certain incidents that were reported by some Jews and Christians who converted to Islam. These reports are not necessarily found in their textual sources, but rather could be the exegetical stories that were reported orally.

As a physician, Sidqi had issues with certain hadiths that he considered incompatible with modern medicine; thus, he rejected them. His writing caused such a commotion in *al-Manār* and other publications that he quickly recanted his views, which soon died out in the Arab world.[51]

Maḥmūd Abū Rayya (d. 1970 CE)

An Egyptian, Maḥmūd Abū Rayya, was the most influential modern critic of the Hadith. He wrote the work *Aḍwā' 'alas-Sunnat al-Muḥammadiyyah* (Lights on the Muhammadan Sunnah) in which he argued that only the Qur'an, reason, and mutawātir hadith were meant to be the basis of Islam. He followed Goldziher and Schacht in arguing that the usage of the term 'Sunnah' to mean what is found in Hadith books is a later invention. He states that early Muslim Hadith scholars did not pay attention to their content and instead focused all their efforts on the *isnād* (chains of narration).[52] He rejected the notion that all the Companions were upright and reliable narrators of Hadith.

Abū Rayya's most surprising attack was against the Companion Abū Hurayrah (ؓ)[53] (d. 57 AH/ 676 CE), whom he characterised as gluttonous and dishonest. Since Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) converted only three years prior to the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), Abū Rayya doubted that he could have heard so much in so little time. Furthermore, he stated that Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) was obsessed with the isrā'īliyāt and had no problem attributing these to the Prophet (ﷺ).

Abū Rayya's work quickly prompted at least eight book-length rebuttals from scholars, the most famous of which is Muṣṭafā as-Sibāʻī's *as-Sunnah wa-Makānatuhā fit-Tashrīʻ al-Islāmī.*[54] In this work, Sibāʻī has refuted many claims of Abū Rayya and exposed his unscholarly methods and parroting of the beliefs of the Orientalists.

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[51] Brown, *Hadith*, pp. 245-246.

[52] Every hadith contains two parts, a *sanad* (chain of narration, pl. *isnād*) and a *matn* (text).

[53] Abū Hurayrah, 'Abdur Raḥmān ibn Sakhr ad-Dawsī, was a Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) and a prolific narrator of hadiths. See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb*, pp. 769-72.

Jeffrey Lang

Lang is an American convert who has written numerous books that contain beneficial information for Muslims in the West. Lang is not a complete rejecter of Hadith, yet he is certainly a Hadith sceptic. He has many views that appear to be criticising early Hadith scholarship. His arguments are at times identical to those of Abū Rayya, and he relies heavily on the work of a particular Orientalist, G.H.A Juynboll. A refutation of Lang's views, and a more detailed account of his ideas, will be given in Chapter Eight.

Ahmed Subhy Mansour

He was born in Egypt on March 1, 1949. He studied in al-Azhar University and taught there as a professor of Islamic history. He was discharged from his teaching position in al-Azhar due to his unorthodox views. In 2002, Mansour went to the United States. Since then, he has held some positions in academic institutions. He is a human rights activist who calls for religious harmony and tolerance.

Mansour started an organization, the International Quranic Center, which claims to follow only the Qur'an. His organisation seeks to spread Islam only among the Muslims. The main goals of this organisation are to spread peace, justice, love, and freedom of religion and thought. They strive to demonstrate that Islam is not a religion of terrorism, and that terrorism is against Qur'anic teachings. Although they claim to follow only the Qur'an, they have mentioned a few arguments against Hadith in the English portion of their website. In the Arabic portion, it is also not clear why they follow only the Qur'an. Instead, most of the information is about the importance of peace, justice, human rights and freedom of speech, which are all indeed part of the Islamic teachings.[55]

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[54] Brown, *Hadith*, pp. 246-248.

Many of Mansour's teachings against Hadith are nearly identical to Rashad Khalifa's. For example, he claims that the prayers, including the Friday prayer, were not taught by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Instead, they were passed down to the Arabs from the prophets Abraham (عليه السلام) and Ishmael (عليه السلام).[56] He was praised by Daniel Pipes, an open antagonist of Islam and Muslims.[57]

It must be noted that although he is a graduate of al-Azhar, Mansour is a scholar of Islamic history rather than Islamic religion. He has no training in Hadith and its sciences. As with other Hadith rejecters, his arguments against Hadith are unscholarly and based on changing the meanings of words.

Maurice Bucaille (d. 1998 CE)

Maurice Bucaille was a French medical doctor who was most famous for his work *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science,* in which he argues that the Qur'an contains no statement which contradicts established scientific fact. He also demonstrates that the Bible contradicts science in many places, making it an unreliable book. In the last chapter of his work, Bucaille casts doubt on some hadiths found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī* because, as he claims, they contradict current scientific ideas. However, he does not reject all the Hadith. His standard for judging the reliability of a hadith is current scientific theory and not authenticity as ascertained by Muslim scholarship.

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[55] Mansour, Ahmed Subhy, *An al-Qurānīyyīn,* 2010. Available at: http://www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/aboutus.php.

[56] Mansour, Ahmed Subhy, *A@s-Ṣalāh bayna al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wal-Muslimīn.* 2010. Available at: http://www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/chapter. php?page_id=37.

[57] Pipes, Daniel, *Identifying Moderate Muslims*, 2004. Available at: http://www.nysun.com/foreign/identifying-moderate-muslims/5248/.

A number of points must be kept in mind with regard to his claims, one being that he misunderstood the Hadith, or the message it was trying to convey. Secondly, science changes every day; what constitutes a scientific fact today can become obsolete tomorrow. Bucaille's work is famous in the Muslim world and must be commended for many of its findings regarding the Qur'an. Unfortunately, however, Bucaille came to the wrong conclusions when it came to Hadith, mainly because he judged them using only science, disregarding everything else that scholars look into when grading a hadith as reliable. As Muslims, we should accept a text if it has been established as authentic, regardless of what others might say. A hadith could be in complete agreement with modern science yet still be fabricated. Ultimately, I am certain that when these hadiths are looked into, we will find that Bucaille misunderstood them. However, the purpose of this work is not to explain every single hadith rejected by Hadith rejecters; it is to demonstrate something more fundamental, which is that their methodology is an unscholarly and incoherent one.

Conclusion

If one accepts the Hadith rejecters' methodology, one is led to the conclusion that the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), their successors, and the scholars of Islam have all been deceived by the Hadith. In reality, Hadith rejecters have accused all the scholars in Islamic history of not being intelligent enough to discover what Syed Ahmad Khan, Abdullah Chakralawi, Rashad Khalifa, Edip Yuksel, United Submitters International and other Hadith rejecters discovered. Likewise, they are insinuating that Muslims have been extremely unfortunate for the past 1,400 years because they were deprived of the intellects that these Hadith rejecters possessed.

Additionally, they imply that Islam has been exceptionally unfortunate, for it has been, throughout all these years, studied by Muslim scholars who were ignorant and reliant on liars and fabricators in all their books, therefore making all of Islam's scholarly history worthless. Even if the work of these Hadith rejecters was praiseworthy and scholarly (which it is not), and even if they turned the pages of books for years, attempting to discover the truth about Hadith (which is not true for any of them), theirs cannot be compared to the work of the superb Hadith scholars.

The early Hadith scholars would willingly walk thousands of miles on foot, travelling all over the Muslim world for many years, spending most of their nights sleeplessly, reading and learning the vast volumes of Hadith under the light of a single candle. Hadith rejecters later came along, pretending to know better and criticising them, all because the Hadith scholars did not come to the same conclusions as they did, over a thousand years later.

Chapter Three

One Form of Revelation?

Let us now analyse the claim that the Prophet (ﷺ) received only one form of revelation and observe how accurate it is according to the Qur'an. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence in the Qur'an that proves that the Prophet (ﷺ) received two forms of revelation. The Qur'an has confirmed that the dreams of prophets are also a means of revelation. Prophet Abraham's[58] dream is an excellent example of a non-scriptural revelation from Allah (ﷻ), as the Qur'an has said:

﴿ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ ٱلسَّعْىَ قَالَ يَـٰبُنَىَّ إِنِّىٓ أَرَىٰ فِى ٱلْمَنَامِ أَنِّىٓ أَذْبَحُكَ فَٱنظُرْ مَاذَا
تَرَىٰ ۚ قَالَ يَـٰٓأَبَتِ ٱفْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ۖ سَتَجِدُنِىٓ إِن شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ مِنَ ٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ ١٠٢ ﴾

(سورة صافات: الآية ١٠٢)

﴿Then, when he reached [the age of] work with him, he said: O my son, surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: Oh my father, do what you are commanded; you will find me, if Allah wills, among the patient ones.﴿ *(Qur'an 37: 102)*

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[58] Muslims, along with Christians and Jews, believe in the ancient prophets: Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the rest (peace be upon them all).

It is evident that this dream was a command from Allah (ﷻ), as we see in the response given by Prophet Abraham's son: {Oh my father, do what you are commanded}. If Prophet Abraham (عليه السلام) can receive revelation through a dream, so can other prophets and messengers.[59] One cannot confine revelation to the recitation of the words of Allah (ﷻ) alone; instead, the revelation can come in different forms. The Qur'an contains abundant evidence to show that other prophets also received revelation in a form other than that of a book, and that it was obligatory for them and their followers to obey the revealed instructions. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ وَأُوحِىَ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ أَنَّهُۥ لَن يُؤْمِنَ مِن قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَن قَدْ ءَامَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ
بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَفْعَلُونَ ٣٦ ﴾ (سورة هود: الآية ٣٦)

﴾And it was revealed to Noah: None of your people will believe except those who have believed already, so be not sad because of what they used to do.﴿ *(Qur'an 11: 36)*

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[59] Allah (ﷻ) has said in *Sūrat* (Chapter) al-Isrā':
﴾And when We said to you: Surely your Lord encompasses men; and We did not make the vision which We showed you except as a trial for the people, and the cursed tree in the Qur'an as well; and We cause them to fear, but it only adds to their great transgression.﴿ *(Qur'an 17: 60)*
According to some scholars, this is referring to the vision that the Prophet (ﷺ) had on the night of his journey to the heavens, thus it has been mentioned in the chapter of the night journey. This verse also points out that such a vision is a trial for humankind, a subtle indication that the second form of revelation is also a trial and test for humans. The majority of scholars debate this viewpoint; nevertheless it is a possibility, even if it is not strong.
See Bayḍāwī, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar. *Anwār at-Tanzīl wa Asrār at-Ta'wīl.* Lucknow: Niwal Kishur, 1865.

﴿ ... قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ إِنِّيٓ أَعْلَمُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ ﴾

(سورة يوسف: الآية ٩٦)

❮...Jacob said: Did I not tell you that I know from Allah that which you know not?❯ *(Qur'an 12: 96)*

﴿ ... وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُم بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَٰذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ ﴾

(سورة يوسف: الآية ١٥)

❮...And We revealed to him [Joseph]: Indeed, you shall inform them of their affair, when they know not.❯ *(Qur'an 12: 15)*

The Qur'an has made no mention of Prophet Noah (عليه السلام), Jacob (عليه السلام), or Joseph (عليه السلام) receiving any scripture. Hence, this verse establishes that revelation is not limited to a book; Allah (ﷻ) can reveal His teachings in different ways.

In addition, Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُكَلِّمَهُ ٱللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِن وَرَآيِٕ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا
فَيُوحِىَ بِإِذْنِهِۦ مَا يَشَآءُ إِنَّهُۥ عَلِىٌّ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ ﴾ (سورة شورى: الآية ٥١)

❮It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.❯ *(Qur'an 42: 51)*

The aforementioned verse has specified the different forms of revelation. The Qur'an falls into the third category – it was revealed through a messenger (Gabriel [as]) sent by Allah (ﷻ) to the Prophet (ﷺ). The Sunnah was revealed through the first kind – it was direct revelation or inspiration. Pertaining to the *qiblah,*[60] Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:

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[60] The qiblah is the direction Muslims face when praying (that is, toward the *Ka'bah* in Makkah).

﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا۟ شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ ٱلرَّسُولُ
عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا ٱلْقِبْلَةَ ٱلَّتِى كُنتَ عَلَيْهَآ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعُ ٱلرَّسُولَ
مِمَّن يَنقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ ۚ ... ﴿١٤٣﴾ قَدْ نَرَىٰ تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ ۖ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ
قِبْلَةً تَرْضَىٰهَا ۚ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّوا۟
وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُۥ ۗ وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ ٱلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَمَا
ٱللَّهُ بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ١٤٣ -١٤٤)

﴿Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses against humankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you. And We did not make the qiblah which you were on except that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back on his heels… Indeed We see the turning of your face to heaven, so We shall surely turn you to a qiblah which you shall be pleased with; turn then your face towards the sacred mosque [in Makkah], and wherever you are, turn your face towards it, and those who have been given the book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not heedless of what they do.﴿

(Qur'an 2: 143-144)

These verses inform us that the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions used to face *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* in Jerusalem while praying, before they started facing the Ka'bah, in the sacred mosque in Makkah. These verses go on to confirm that the qiblah they were facing earlier was in accordance with the orders from Allah (ﷻ); however, nowhere in the Qur'an do we find a command to face the first qiblah. We deduce from these verses that there must have been a different form of revelation which Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) received, directing him to face al-Aqsa Mosque in the beginning.[61]

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[61] As-Salafī, Luqmān Muḥammad. *Makānat as-Sunnah fit-Tashrī' al-Islāmī wa Daḥḍ Mazā'im al-Munkirīn wal-Mulḥidīn*. India: Dār al-Dā'ī lil Nashr wal-Tawzi', 1999, p. 63.

The Prophet (ﷺ) yearned to face the Ka‘bah. However, despite his desire, he and his Companions still faced the first qiblah of al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. It is evident that facing the first qiblah was mandatory. This indicates that the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions were following a commandment not established by the Qur’an; yet, it was obligatory upon them. Arguing that their facing this first qiblah was based on reason is illogical, since reason cannot guide one to face a certain qiblah while praying, especially while keeping in mind that the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted to face the Ka‘bah.[62]

It should also be noted that the changing of the qiblah was a test for the Muslims. It was meant to distinguish between those who followed the Messenger (ﷺ) and the ones who turned away. This verse is perhaps sending a subtle message, that this second form of revelation is also a test to determine who obeys and follows the Messenger (ﷺ). This verse has established that one has to follow the sayings and commands of the Messenger (ﷺ) and not just adhere to what is found only in the Qur’an. Allah (ﷻ) has made it clear from this verse that He wants to distinguish those who follow the Messenger (ﷺ) from those who disobey him. He did not say that He wants to distinguish those who follow the Qur’an from those who do not; consequently, this must mean that the sayings and commands of the Messenger (ﷺ) are authoritative. Clearly, his sayings are not found in the Qur’an, and so there must be a separate revelation.

Allah (ﷻ) has also said in the Qur’an:

﴿ وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ ٱلنَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَزْوَٰجِهِۦ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِۦ وَأَظْهَرَهُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهُۥ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنۢ بَعْضٍ ۖ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِۦ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنۢبَأَكَ هَٰذَا ۖ قَالَ
نَبَّأَنِىَ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ٱلْخَبِيرُ ﴿٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة تحريم: الآية ٣)

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[62] ‘Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, pp. 331-332.

﴿And when the Prophet secretly told a piece of information to one of his wives, but when she informed [others] of it, and Allah made him know it, he made known part of it and avoided part; so when he told her of it, she said: Who informed you of this? He said: The Knowing, The One Aware, informed me.﴾ *(Qur'an 66: 3)*

One cannot locate in the Qur'an the exact place where Allah (ﷻ) informs the Prophet (ﷺ) that his wife revealed his secret. Again, this shows that there must have been another form of revelation.

Another example is the following verse:

﴿ أُحِلَّ لَكُمۡ لَيۡلَةَ ٱلصِّيَامِ ٱلرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَآئِكُمۡۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٞ لَّكُمۡ وَأَنتُمۡ لِبَاسٞ
لَّهُنَّۗ عَلِمَ ٱللَّهُ أَنَّكُمۡ كُنتُمۡ تَخۡتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمۡ فَتَابَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَعَفَا عَنكُمۡۖ
فَٱلۡـَٰٔنَ بَٰشِرُوهُنَّ وَٱبۡتَغُواْ مَا كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمۡۚ وَكُلُواْ وَٱشۡرَبُواْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ
ٱلۡخَيۡطُ ٱلۡأَبۡيَضُ مِنَ ٱلۡخَيۡطِ ٱلۡأَسۡوَدِ مِنَ ٱلۡفَجۡرِۖ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّواْ ٱلصِّيَامَ إِلَى ٱلَّيۡلِۚ ...
١٨٧ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ١٨٧)

﴿It is made lawful to you to go into your wives on the night of the fast; they are a garment for you and you are a garment for them; Allah knew that you betrayed yourselves, so He has relented towards you and pardoned you; so now have intercourse with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn, then complete the fast until night…﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 187)*

This verse shows that conjugal relations during the nights of Ramadan had been prohibited before the revelation of the Qur'an. Allah (ﷻ) had condemned those who had sexual relations with their spouses during the nights of Ramadan. The portion of the verse which states that {He has relented towards you and pardoned you} shows that their sexual intimacy during the nights of Ramadan had been a sin, because relenting and pardoning only happen after one has committed a sin. The words {so now have intercourse with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you} indicate that it is only now that sexual intercourse during the nights of Ramadan is permissible, whereas previously it was not.

Yet there is no verse in the Qur'an that prohibited it; it was the Prophet (ﷺ) who had forbidden it. Allah (ﷻ) not only confirmed this prohibition but described those who had disobeyed it as disobedient to Him. This is because the Prophet (ﷺ) had not prohibited it by himself; it had been a command from Allah (ﷻ) that was not found in the Qur'an. This verse not only makes it obvious that there was a separate form of revelation apart from the Qur'an, but it also confirms that the Prophet (ﷺ) was a separate lawgiver, whose commands were (and are) binding on Muslims.[63]

A final example is that of the funeral prayer. Allah (ﷻ) has commanded the Prophet (ﷺ) not to perform the funeral prayer for the hypocrites, stating:

﴿ وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰٓ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُم مَّاتَ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَىٰ قَبْرِهِۦٓ ... ﴿٨٤﴾ ﴾

(سورة توبة: الآية ٨٤)

﴿Never pray for any of them who dies, nor stand at his grave...﴾
(Qur'an 9: 84)

Commenting on this verse, Habib-ur-Rahman Azami says:

> The verse implies that such funeral services had begun to be performed and that the Prophet used to offer prayers at the burial of the dead before this particular verse was revealed; yet no verse revealed earlier than this one can be cited as enjoining such services or prayers upon the Prophet and the Muslims. It must, therefore, be conceded that the command for the burial service was given through the sunnah.[64]

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[63] Usmani, Muhammad Taqī. *The Authority of Sunnah.* New Delhi, India: Kitab Bhavan, 1991, pp. 26-28.

[64] Azami, Habib-ur-Rahman. *The Sunnah in Islam: The Eternal Relevance of the Teaching and Example of the Prophet Muhammad.* United Kingdom: UK Islamic Academy, 1989, p. 32.

These are just a few examples, among many in the Qur'an, which clarify that the Prophet (ﷺ) was receiving a different form of revelation, in addition to the Qur'an.[65] When one studies these verses with an open mind, one can only conclude that the Prophet (ﷺ) received a different form of revelation, which is binding on the Muslims today, just as it was binding on them during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, since this is not a Qur'anic revelation, we must have another source aside from the Qur'an. Naturally, this source includes the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) in the form of the Hadith and Sunnah. Besides the consensus among the Muslims that the Sunnah is a form of revelation, these verses leave one with no recourse but to acknowledge the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) did indeed receive revelation aside from the Qur'an. Since this is the case, one who denies the authority of the Prophet's sayings is denying a form of revelation from Allah (ﷻ). Whoever rejects one form of revelation is in reality rejecting them all, whether he or she realises it or not.

[65] Usmani has quoted about sixteen verses of this nature in his book, *The Authority of Sunnah.* See footnote # 73.

Chapter Four

The Prophet (ﷺ) as a Teacher

In the Qur'an, the Prophet's mission can be summarised in the following verse:

﴿ لَقَدْ مَنَّ ٱللَّهُ عَلَى ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولاً مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ لَفِى ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: الآية ١٦٤)

﴿Verily Allah has bestowed grace on the believers by sending to them a Messenger from among themselves who recites to them His revelations, and purifies them, and teaches them the book and wisdom; although before they were in manifest error.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 164)

The aforementioned verse has specified four duties of the Prophet (ﷺ). Allah's guidance to humankind can be fulfilled by all of these, not only one. If the Prophet's mission was simply to deliver the Qur'an, then it would have sufficed for Allah (ﷻ) to end the verse after saying: {who recites to them His revelations}. Yet He has added three other duties of the Prophet (ﷺ) that are distinct from simple recitation of the Qur'an: purification, teaching the book and teaching wisdom. The Prophet's duty to 'purify them' has been mentioned because without purification, one cannot correctly understand the book and the wisdom. The heart must be pure from ill intentions, inclinations and desires in order to learn the true message of Allah (ﷻ) and refrain from interpreting it according to one's own whims and desires. It is obvious from the verse that one of the Prophet's missions was to teach the Qur'an.

If one rejects the Hadith, then these teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) are lost. Since one teaches by word and example, there must be a source along with the Qur'an that tells us about the Prophet's actions. The Prophet (ﷺ) was sent to teach the Qur'an; however, Hadith rejecters limit his mission to some kind of postman who simply recites the message and then departs. Indeed, part of delivering the message is teaching the book; for without his teachings, the message remains incomplete and thus, humans are not guided in totality.

Considering the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent as a teacher, let us look at what he was sent to teach. Part of the Prophet's mission was to teach the 'book and the wisdom'. Imam ash-Shāfi'ī and others have said that the wisdom is the Sunnah, whereas Hadith rejecters argue that it is the book – the Qur'an. If we concur and assume it does mean the Qur'an, we must ask: what does teaching the Qur'an mean? Does it mean simply reciting it? No, rather, it means explaining its general details, clarifying misunderstandings, and being a living, walking example of what is being preached. We can rightly conclude that this verse is telling us that his teachings and explanation of the Qur'an are authoritative.[66] Thus, if one denies Hadith, all these teachings are lost. Without a doubt, if people living during his time needed his teachings, then those after him need them even more.

However, does the word 'wisdom' in the verse really mean the Qur'an or something different? Allah (ﷻ) said in the verse quoted above: {...and teaches them the book and wisdom}. The word

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[66] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah,* pp. 295.

'wisdom' is most likely not referring to the Qur'an, because it has been something mentioned alongside the Qur'an. Otherwise, the verse would be saying 'and he teaches them the book and the book', which simply does not make sense. Thus, we deduce that it must be the Sunnah, exclusive of anything else. Allah (ﷻ) has graced the believers by sending them both the general principles of Islam found in the Qur'an, and their application found in the Sunnah. Allah (ﷻ) has specified that He graced the believers by teaching them the wisdom, and Allah's grace can only be on something that is true and in complete accordance with His teachings. Therefore, the wisdom must be followed and obeyed, just like the Qur'an. That is why Allah (ﷻ) has mentioned it alongside the Qur'an – the book. Throughout the rest of the Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) has ordered us to follow His book and the Messenger (ﷺ). Therefore, the word 'wisdom' is nothing other than the Sunnah, or way of the Messenger (ﷺ).[67] This is further evidence that the Sunnah is a form of revelation that Muslims are obliged to follow.

Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۝٢ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ
أَن تَقُولُواْ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۝٣ ﴾ (سورة صف: الآية ٢ – ٣)

﴾O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not do.﴿ *(Qur'an 61: 2-3)*

If the Prophet's actions had not been a living example of the Qur'an, that simply means he would have commanded people to do that which he himself did not do. In other words, it would be the case that he recited the Qur'an while not practicing its teachings. This cannot be true, because Allah (ﷻ) has praised his character in the following verse:

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[67] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, p. 298.

﴿ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ٤ ﴾ (سورة قلم: الآية ٤)

﴿And you surely are upon an exalted standard of character.﴾
(Qur'an 68: 4)

This must mean that his character, which includes his sayings and deeds, was in conformity with the Qur'an. Otherwise, Allah (ﷻ) would not have praised him. Since his character is the best of characters, it is only logical for the Muslims to imitate and follow him. How can one do this without knowing how he behaved in his everyday life? Allah's praise of the Prophet's character is a clear command that Muslims should emulate and imitate him to the best of their ability.

Since the Qur'an is from Allah and the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent to teach and explain it, it is unreasonable to state that his teaching of the Qur'an was from himself and not Allah (ﷻ). The rejecters of Hadith claim that the Sunnah was from the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. In other words, he explained the Qur'an and organised the Muslim community only for the people of his time. In addition, they hold the belief that Islam is based only on the Qur'an, and we can explain it as we understand it, so according to their mindset, we need not turn to Hadith.[68] But if the people during the Prophet's era needed him to explain the Qur'an, why would those who came later not need any explanation at all? Allah (ﷻ) could have just sent a Qur'an to each individual and told them to live according to it. The following verse again clarifies that another duty of the Prophet (ﷺ) was to explain the Qur'an:

﴿ ... وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ٤٤ ﴾ (سورة نحل: الآية ٤٤)

﴿...And We sent down to you the reminder so that you may explain to people what was revealed to them and so they may reflect.﴾
(Qur'an 16: 44)

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[68] As-Salafī, *Makānat as-Sunnah,* p. 62.

Furthermore, it is well established that the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent to Arabia at a time when the Arabs excelled in all aspects of linguistic arts of the Arabic language. They competed in poetry and had eloquent speeches and dialogues, all of which are the main sources of Arabic literature today. They did not need anyone to translate the Qur'an for them. It was revealed in their mother tongue, and it is obvious that the Prophet's explanation was more than merely the literal meaning. Instead, it must mean that he explained the deeper meanings, implications and details of the Qur'anic verses that were not mentioned in the Qur'an itself.

Allah (ﷻ) has described the role of the Prophet (ﷺ) as an explainer of the Qur'an; explanation is much more than simple recitation. Hadith rejecters reply to this argument by quoting the following verse:

﴿ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُۥ ١٩ ﴾ (سورة قيامة: الآية ١٩)

﴾Nay more, it is for Us to explain it.﴿ *(Qur'an 75: 19)*

These explanations are not found in the Qur'an. Nowhere do we find in it the explanation of *ṣalāh* (formal prayer), zakāh, the rituals of Hajj, or other acts of worship. For instance, how does one ascertain that the Ka'bah has to be circumambulated seven times and not more or fewer times? The two verses seem to contradict one another; one states that Allah (ﷻ) will explain the Qur'an, while the other states that the Prophet (ﷺ) will explain it. Since no explanation of the details of this matter can be found in the Qur'an, the only way to reconcile the two is to conclude that Allah (ﷻ) will explain the Qur'an through the Prophet (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) has described the Prophet (ﷺ) as a shining lamp, illuminating the path for humanity:

﴿ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِىُّ إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَـٰكَ شَـٰهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ٤٥ وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى ٱللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِۦ
وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيرًا ٤٦ ﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: الآية ٤٥ – ٤٦)

﴾O Prophet! Verily, We have sent you as a witness, and as a bearer of good news and as a warner. And as one who invites to Allah's [grace] by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light.﴿ *(Qur'an 33: 45-46)*

The Prophet's duty was to illuminate the path for the servants of Allah (ﷻ), differentiating between night and day, truth and falsehood, guidance and misguidance, belief and disbelief. If Allah (ﷻ) had intended only the Qur'an as a source of guidance, He could have described the Qur'an as a lamp. Instead, He has described the Prophet (ﷺ) as such. The renowned modern Hadith scholar, M. Al-Azami has stated:

> Many of the Qur'ānic injunctions – such as those dealing with prayer, *zakāt*, *hajj*, usury, and other commercial transactions – needed careful explanation. The Prophet, as expounder of the Qur'ān, must have both explained them verbally and demonstrated them in practice. These explanations had the force of law and came under the heading of the *sunna* of the Prophet. Thus, the *sunna* came into existence simultaneously with the revelation of the Qur'ān and were part of the process of the creation of an Islamic system of jurisprudence.[69]

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[69] Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 1985, p. 20.

Chapter Five

Arguments used by Rejecters of Hadith

In his article *Pakistani Views of Hadith*, J.M.S. Baljon, Jr. has given a survey of the arguments against the application of Hadith for practice and faith.[70] Let us look at some of their main arguments:[71]

Argument 1: "The Qur'an explains everything, therefore the Hadith are superfluous."

The two verses usually cited to support this argument are:

﴿ وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَٰٓئِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّآ أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُم ۚ مَّا فَرَّطْنَا
فِي ٱلْكِتَٰبِ مِن شَيْءٍ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة أنعام: الآية ٣٨)

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[70] Baljon, J. M. S. "Pakistani Views of Hadith." *Die Welt Des Islams* 5, no. 3/4 (1958), pp. 220-221.

[71] All the four arguments can be found in *Maqām al-Ḥadīth*, which is a two-volume work containing a collection of papers by members of *Ṭulū' al-Islām*, an institute in Karachi that seeks to interpret the Qur'an in the light of modern thought while using only the Qur'an itself. The work contains many arguments, but I have chosen only the main ones.

﴾There is not a beast on the earth, nor a flying creature flying on two wings, but are communities like you. We have not omitted anything from the book, then they will all be gathered to their Lord.﴿

(Qur'an 6: 38)

﴿ ... وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ تِبْيَٰنًا لِّكُلِّ شَىْءٍ ... ﴿٨٩﴾ ﴾ (سورة النحل: الآية ٨٩)

﴾...We have sent down to you the book explaining all things...﴿

(Qur'an 16: 89)

The argument based on these two verses is that everything about the religion is found in the Qur'an. Since the Qur'an clarifies things and details them, it does not need anything else like the Sunnah. Otherwise, these verses would not be true. Accordingly, anything outside the Qur'an contradicts these verses and must not be accepted.

It should first be noted that these verses were not the final revealed verses of the Qur'an; they were both revealed in Makkah. Hence, they cannot possibly mean that the Qur'an explains everything and provides all details. If that were the case, then there would be no need for any other verses to be revealed further. The words 'anything' and 'all things' in the verses should be understood as general statements. The Qur'an has described the grievous wind sent to the people of 'Ād as:

﴿ تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَىْءٍۭ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا ... ﴿٢٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة الأحقاف: الآية ٢٥)

﴾Destroying everything by the command of its Lord...﴿

(Qur'an 46: 25)

The wind obviously did not destroy everything; this is only a general statement. The same applies to the aforementioned two verses: the Qur'an does not detail everything. It only contains general guidelines for those who truly seek guidance.

Additionally, the first verse must be looked at in its context. The book mentioned in this verse may not be the Qur'an; instead, it could be referring to the Preserved Tablet.[72] In other words, the lives and sustenance of all the creatures are recorded on the Preserved Tablet, leaving nothing out.[73]

The verse is communicating to us that all creatures are nations like us, but the details of the lives of these creatures, their sustenance and much more, are not found in the Qur'an. The Qur'an did not lay down laws regarding their lives as it did for ors. However, the verse indicates that all matters of their lives are indeed found in the book; therefore, it cannot be the Qur'an. Rather, it is the Preserved Tablet in the heavens that contains the details of all things.

Even if the book mentioned in the verse does mean the Qur'an, it is to be taken as a general statement. This is because the Qur'an does not contain all the details of all things. If the book in this verse refers to the Qur'an, Ibn al-Jawzi[74] (d. 597 AH/ 1200 CE) explains it in the following way:

> It is a general statement that has a specific intent behind it. Therefore the meaning is: We have not kept out anything which you need except that it has been made clear in the Qur'ān, by either a clear text, a statement that is not detailed, or indication.[75]

The claim that the Qur'an contains all the details is rejected because reality confirms otherwise, seeing how the details of ṣalāh, zakāh, Hajj and other matters, relating to both religion and worldly life, are not found in the Qur'an. To interpret the verse to mean that the Qur'an contains everything in it leads us to deny the truth of it. Therefore, it must have a different meaning. To hold that these verses mean that the Qur'an contains all the details actually contradicts the following verse:

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[72] The Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*), referred to in (Qur'an 85: 21-22) is a tablet kept in heaven, which is the original copy of the Qur'an as well as the record of the decisions of the divine will.

[73] Zarabozo, M. Jamaal ad-Din. *The Authority and Importance of the Sunnah*. Denver, USA: Al-Basheer Publications and Translations, 2000, pp. 67-68.

[74] 'Abdur Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī was a jurist, Hadith scholar, historian, preacher, and one of the most famous Ḥanbalī scholars of Baghdad. See H. Laoust, *EI2*, art. *Ibn al-Djawzī*.

[75] Ibn al-Jawzī, 'Abdur Raḥmān. *Zād al-Masīr fī 'Ilm at-Tafsīr*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1987, p. 26.

﴿ ... وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة نحل: الآية ٤٤)

﴾...And We sent down to you the reminder so that you may explain to people what was revealed to them and so they may reflect.﴿
(Qur'an 16: 44)

If something is clear and contains all the details, it does not need further explanation and clarification.[76] The Qur'an itself does not contain specific details for everything; it only tells us where to go to find the information. Therefore, this verse is not a proof against Hadith; on the contrary, it establishes the need for and validity of Hadith. Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:

﴿ ... فَسْـَٔلُوٓاْ أَهْلَ ٱلذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧﴾ ﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: الآية ٧)

﴾...Ask the people of the reminder if you do not know.﴿
(Qur'an 21: 7)

The Prophet (ﷺ) was one of the people of the reminder; if one does not know and the answer cannot be located in the Qur'an, one must turn to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the people of knowledge. Allah (ﷻ) has further said in the Qur'an:

﴿ ... وَمَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَىٰكُمْ عَنْهُ فَٱنتَهُواْ ... ﴿٧﴾ ﴾

(سورة حشر: الآية ٧)

﴾...Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it...﴿ *(Qur'an 59: 7)*

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[76] Ṭaha, Ḥamdī Ṣubḥ. *Rad Shubuh al-Munkirīn li-Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah.* Cairo: Dār an-Nahḍah al-'Arabiyyah, 1996, pp. 60-61.

This verse clearly states that Muslims must take what the Prophet (ﷺ) gives them. Had everything already been mentioned and found in the Qur'an, would Allah (ﷻ) have ordered us to take what the Messenger gives and abstain from what he forbids? The language used in the verse is especially clear: *mā* (whatever) is a word that implies generality, meaning that one must take everything that the Prophet (ﷺ) gives them, regardless of whether it is a verse from the Qur'an. If it was not so, Allah (ﷻ) could have said 'whatever Allah gives you'. Instead, He commanded us to take whatever the Messenger gives. Allah (ﷻ) is also indicating that whatever the Messenger gives or prohibits is therefore in compliance with His directives. Thus, the Qur'an tells its readers to refer to the Messenger and scholars as supplemental sources. From these two verses, we can conclude that the Qur'an is not a book of detail; however, it tells believers how and where to find these details and explanations.

Rejecters of Hadith also use the following verse as evidence:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَانَ فِى قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ
وَلَٰكِن تَصْدِيقَ ٱلَّذِى بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝١١١ ﴾ (سورة يوسف: الآية ١١١)

﴾Verily in their stories is a lesson for those of understanding. It is not a story[77] invented, but a verification of what is before it and a distinct explanation of all things and a guide and a mercy to a people who believe.﴿ *(Qur'an 12: 111)*

The word used in this verse (translated here as 'distinct explanation') is *tafṣīl*, a word used in both Urdu and Arabic; however, Chakralawi uses this word according to its Urdu meaning. In Urdu, it means pointing out minute details, although in Arabic it means to explain and clarify. His replacing the Arabic meaning of the word tafṣīl with the Urdu meaning is erroneous.[78]

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[77] The word used for story here is 'hadith'; the use of the word 'hadith' in the Qur'an will be discussed later in the book.

Some people say they only accept those hadiths that do not contradict the Qur'an. They reject those which seem contradictory to it. Ibn Ḥazm has stated that there is no authentic hadith contradictory to the Qur'an and its teachings. If one considers anything additional to the Qur'an as a contradiction, then he must find its authentic details in the Qur'an – something which cannot be done, because the Qur'an does not contain details. If one claims that the Qur'an contains details about and has clarified everything that is permissible and prohibited, then such a person will be forced to make the consumption of excrement permissible, because the Qur'an says:

﴿ قُل لَّآ أَجِدُ فِي مَآ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَىٰ طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُۥٓ إِلَّآ أَن يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً
أَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُۥ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ ٱللَّهِ بِهِۦ
فَمَنِ ٱضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ١٤٥ ﴾

(سورة أنعام: الآية ١٤٥)

﴿Say: I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden to one who would eat it except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine – for it is an abomination -- or what is immolated on which a name has been invoked, other than Allah's. But (even so), if a person is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits – your Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 145)*

Excrement has not been mentioned in this verse.

This person is also forced to make it permissible for a man to be married to a woman and her aunt or niece simultaneously. This is because Allah (ﷻ) has only specified the female relatives who are prohibited in marriage, among whom the aunt and niece combination has not been mentioned. Thereafter, He has stated:

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[78] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, p. 212.

﴿ ... وَأُحِلَّ لَكُم مَّا وَرَآءَ ذَٰلِكُمْ ... ﴿٢٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٢٤)

﴾...And lawful for you are [all women] besides these...﴿

(Qur'an 4: 24)

If such a person considers any law not found in the Qur'an contradictory to it, he will be forced to make the aforementioned permissible.[79]

In certain places, the Qur'an appears to imply that it is self-explanatory, easy to understand, and independent of any external source to explain it. We must ask the question: why is the Prophet's explanation so important? If one studies the Qur'an, one finds that it deals with two different types of subjects: one deals with simple realities such as the blessings of Allah (ﷻ) on humankind, the stories of the Prophets, signs in the heavens and earth, Allah's power, the Day of Judgement, heaven and hell, and so on. The other subjects deal with Islamic law.

The first type is called *dhikr* and is easy to understand; even the most uneducated can benefit from it without anyone else explaining it to them. It is concerning these verses that the Qur'an has said:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾ (سورة قمر: الآية ١٧)

﴾And surely We have made the Qur'an easy for dhikr [getting a lesson], so is there any to get a lesson?﴿ *(Qur'an 54: 17)*

By no means does this extend to the legal and doctrinal rules and their interpretation. This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent to teach.[80] It is true that the Qur'an has been made easy to remember and acquire lessons from, but this does not contradict the Prophet's role as an explainer of the Qur'an. Anyone who reads the Qur'an will acknowledge that certain matters in it, especially laws, need explanation and are not clear based on the Qur'an alone. Finally, by adhering to the Hadith, one is not following something different than the Qur'an. Instead, one is simply following the Qur'an's interpretation. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

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[79] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, p. 254.

[80] Usmani, *The Authority of the Sunnah*, pp. 59-60.

﴿ وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتُنَا بَيِّنَٰتٍ ۙ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا ٱئْتِ بِقُرْءَانٍ
غَيْرِ هَٰذَآ أَوْ بَدِّلْهُ ۚ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِىٓ أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُۥ مِن تِلْقَآئِ نَفْسِىٓ ۖ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ
إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰٓ إِلَىَّ ۖ إِنِّىٓ أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّى عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ ﴾

(سورة يونس: الآية ١٥)

﴿And when Our clear signs are recited to them, those who hope not for Our meeting say: Bring a Qur'an other than this or change it. Say: It is not for me to change it myself; I follow naught but what is revealed to me; surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a mighty day.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 15)*

The Hadith rejecters misinterpret this verse as well, alleging that this is clear proof that only the Qur'an should be followed and that those who follow Hadith are similar to those who, when the Qur'an is recited to them, ask for a different Qur'an or book. However, by adhering to the Prophet's sayings, one is not asking for a book other than the Qur'an; rather, one is following its true interpretation and striving to become a living example of the Qur'an through the Prophet's life. Hence, the Sunnah is the interpretation and application of the Qur'an, not its replacement.

This verse also states that the Prophet (ﷺ) only followed what was revealed to him. Accordingly, the Prophet (ﷺ) could not have demonstrated to people how to pray, give zakāh, and perform other acts mentioned in the Qur'an according to his own whims and personal interpretation. If that were the case, he would have been following other than what was revealed to him, establishing rituals and laws without the permission of Allah (ﷻ) and fabricating things in His name, thereby committing a grave sin. The verse informs us that the Prophet (ﷺ) would not do that. Therefore, everything the Prophet (ﷺ) did and established as law for his followers must be from Allah (ﷻ).[81] Shah Shahidullah Faridī summarised the nature of the Qur'an when he wrote:

> The Qur'an deals extensively with matters of faith and morality, the nature of Allah, the reality of Prophet-hood, the Day of Judgment, the life of the next world, the principles of worship, or human relations and the inward attitude man must cultivate towards Allah and his fellowmen; it also lays down civil and criminal laws, but of necessity, since the Qur'an is intended to be easily read, understood and encompassed, detailed application of the law is not its subject, and it is part of Allah's providence that this should be demonstrated by His Prophet.[82]

Argument 2: "Nowhere does the Qur'an command that we put faith in Hadith; on the contrary, it cautions against it.

﴿ وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِى لَهْوَ ٱلْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٦﴾ ﴾ (سورة لقمان: الآية ٦)

﴾And of humankind are those who purchase frivolous hadiths, to mislead from the path of God without knowledge and to make a mockery out of it. For such there is a humiliating penalty.﴿

(Qur'an 31: 6)

Some Hadith rejecters use a few verses in the Qur'an that mention the word 'hadith' to argue against the use of Hadith. Rashad

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[81] Ṭaha, *Rad Shubuh al-Munkirīn*, p. 30.

[82] Faridi, Shah Shahidullah. "The Fallacies of Anti-Hadith Arguments." In *Hadith and Sunnah – Ideals and Realities.* Edited by P. K. Koya. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1996, p. 199.

Khalifa is among those who support this argument using the following verses:[83]

﴿ أَوَلَمْ يَنظُرُوا۟ فِى مَلَكُوتِ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ مِن شَىْءٍ وَأَنْ
عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَكُونَ قَدِ ٱقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ ۖ فَبِأَىِّ حَدِيثٍۭ بَعْدَهُۥ يُؤْمِنُونَ ١٨٥ ﴾

(سورة أعراف: الآية ١٨٥)

﴾Do they not look in the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all things that Allah has created, and that it may be that their term is near? In what **hadith** after this will they then believe?﴿ *(Qur'an 7: 185)*

﴿ وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِى لَهْوَ ٱلْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۚ أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ٦ وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ ءَايَـٰتُنَا وَلَّىٰ
مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَأَنَّ فِىٓ أُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا ۖ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ٧ ﴾

(سورة لقمان: الآية ٦ — ٧)

﴾And of humankind are those who purchase frivolous **hadiths**, to mislead from the path of God without knowledge and to make a mockery out of it. For such there is a humiliating penalty. And when Our signs are recited to him, he turns away in his arrogance as if he did not hear them, as if there were deafness in his ears. So give him tidings of a painful doom.﴿ *(Qur'an 31: 6-7)*

﴿ تِلْكَ ءَايَـٰتُ ٱللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِٱلْحَقِّ ۖ فَبِأَىِّ حَدِيثٍۭ بَعْدَ ٱللَّهِ وَءَايَـٰتِهِۦ
يُؤْمِنُونَ ٦ ﴾ (سورة جاثية: الآية ٦)

﴾Such are the signs of Allah, which We rehearse to you in truth. Then in what **hadith** will they believe after Allah and His signs?﴿
(Qur'an 45: 6)

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[83] Khalifa, Rashad. *Quran: The Final Testament.* Tucson: Islamic Productions, 1989.

Jeffrey Lang rightly points out that it is impossible for the word 'hadith' in these verses to refer to the narratives about the Prophet's sayings and deeds.

Firstly, this restricted meaning in Islamic scholarship emerged well after the Prophet's lifetime. Secondly, it is not conceivable that during the Prophet's lifetime, his enemies preferred his Hadith to the Qur'an or were promoting them in an effort to undermine his mission. Instead, the word 'hadith' in these verses must carry its literal meaning such as a speech, tale, report, or account. The Qur'an does not explicitly refer to either the words 'Sunnah' or 'Hadith'. It does, however, mention the Sunnah of Allah (ﷻ) and the Sunnah of the ancients, and it does use the word 'hadith' many times. However, it never associates either word with the Prophet (ﷺ). We should not expect the language of the Qur'an to conform to the terminology of later Islamic sciences.[84]

The word 'hadith' lexically means communication, story, or conversation, whether it is religious or secular, historical or recent. Whenever it is used as an adjective, it means new. It has been used 23 times in the Qur'an.[85] Hadith scholars use the word 'Hadith' as a technical term to define any report of the Prophet's sayings, actions, tacit approval, biographical data, his manners and physical characteristics; they do not use it in its literal sense.

Hadith rejecters take the word 'hadith' and assume that it has always had this technical meaning. Thus, they quote verses from the Qur'an that contain the word 'hadith' and attempt to use it as an argument against the Prophet's traditions. However, they conveniently leave out those verses that prove their usage of the word to be out of context. For instance, when speaking of the people of Sheba, Allah (ﷻ) has said:

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[84] Lang, Jeffrey. *Losing My Religion: A Call for Help.* Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2004, p. 174.

[85] Al-Azami, M. Mustafa. *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature.* Burr Ridge, IL: American Trust Publications, 1992, p. 1.

﴿... فَجَعَلْنَٰهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ ... ﴿١٩﴾﴾ (سورة سبأ: الآية ١٩)

﴿...We made them a hadith [a tale]...﴾ *(Qur'an 34: 19)*

It is rather foolish to conclude that Allah (ﷻ) would have made the people of Sabā' a report or narration of the Prophet (ﷺ). Hadith scholars sometimes use the word *khabar* (news) or *āthār* (traces or narrations) as synonyms for Hadith. Would the Hadith rejecters then find verses in the Qur'an containing these words to argue against the use of khabar and āthār? This can easily fool or convince someone who has no knowledge of the Arabic language. We see once more how unscholarly and misleading their approach is. They have based this argument on mistranslated verses, twisting the meaning of the words used in the Qur'an. Expounding on this further, M. Al-Azami says:

> In Islam the legislative authorities have been fixed from the very beginning not by the lawyers but Almighty Allah. We have already seen that the legislative authority of the Prophet is laid down in the Qur'ān, where it is clearly shown that obedience to the Prophet is a Divine order and the Prophet's legal authority therefore stems from Divine revelation. The second point is that the Qur'ān never says that the source of law is *sunna* but specifically enjoins obedience to the Messenger of Allah and conformity with the examples he established. Thus, even if one were to agree with Schacht[86] that Shāfi'ī was the first to use the term *sunna* exclusively for the *sunna* of the Prophet while earlier scholars used the word in a broader sense, this would in no way detract from the conceptual authority of the *sunna* of the Prophet. *The source of law is not the word itself but the concept, which derived its authority directly from the Qur'ān.*[87]

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[86] It is worth noting that Schacht, a leading Orientalist, is making a somewhat similar argument against the Sunnah as the Hadith rejecters; he argues that since the word was not used by early scholars to refer exclusively to the Prophet (ﷺ), it is evidence that the Sunnah is not authoritative.

[87] Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 36.

Argument 3: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: « Do not write anything from me except the Qur'an. » (Muslim)

Here, they use one hadith to prove that all hadiths are fabricated, thereby proving themselves wrong. If they do not recognise the hadiths as a source and say they are all fabricated, then why even accept this particular hadith and use it as evidence for their argument? They accept this hadith that prohibits writing, but reject other numerous hadiths that permit it. The purpose and goal of research should be to discover the truth no matter where it is, not to take what suits the researchers' agenda or desires and reject what they do not like. This approach is similar to that of those who rely only on alleged reason; when one of their leaders was asked to evaluate two hadiths narrated by the same narrators, he authenticated the first and rejected the second, only because he agreed with the first one and disagreed with the second.[88] If the narrators are truthful in one thing they narrate, it is unfair to call them liars when they narrate something that does not suit one's beliefs. Either they are reliable or they are not.

In his book *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reconciles the conflicting hadiths on the prohibition and permissibility of writing Hadith. He begins his book by listing all the narrations, both authentic and weak, from the Prophet (ﷺ), his Companions and successors that prohibit writing. In the next part of the book, he lists all the narrations in which reasons are given as to why writing was prohibited. In the third part of his book, he mentions all the narrations that permit and encourage writing. The author remains silent throughout most of the book, and indeed, he does not have to say anything since the narrations do all the talking. He brings together all the narrations, and it becomes evident that when writing was prohibited, it was done so for specific reasons, such as the prevention of the possibility of knowledge falling into the wrong hands, or because people might mix the wordings of the hadiths with those of the Qur'an, or for fear that people would start depending on books and no longer memorise knowledge, even though writing in general was allowed and recommended.

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[88] Brown, Jonathan A. C. "How We Know Early Hadith Critics did *Matn* Criticism and Why it's so Hard to Find". *Islamic Law and Society* 15, no. 2 (2008), p. 167.

Every hadith against writing is weak except one, and even that one hadith is disputed. According to Bukhari and others, it is a statement of Abū Sā'īd al-Khudrī[89] (d. 74 AH/ 693 CE), which has been erroneously attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ). Let us take the side of the scholars who assume it is an authentic hadith; what does this hadith mean? According to the majority of scholars, the Prophet (ﷺ) actually meant that nothing should be written in addition to the Qur'an on the same sheet because this might make the reader think that the words in the margins or between the lines are actually part of the Qur'an.

Additionally, the Prophet (ﷺ) made this statement during the early period of Islam, when the Qur'an was still in a state of infancy. There is plenty of evidence that the Prophet (ﷺ) approved of recording hadiths and that a large number of Companions did record them; among them were those who were responsible for transmitting the very hadith which forbade recording them.[90] There are also narrations where the Prophet (ﷺ) encourages others to narrate hadiths from him and for those present to convey his teachings to the absent.

M. al-Azami lists, and discusses individually, fifty Companions who wrote and possessed collections of Hadith, and he states that some had done so in the Prophet's mosque. This writing and collection of Hadith could not have been done without the Prophet's permission. He also lists 49 scholars from the first century successors, 87 from the late first century and early second century scholars, and 251 from the early second century scholars, all of whom recorded Hadith.[91] If one rejects the existence of authentic Hadith compiled before the Prophet's death, on the basis that it was not in written form (assuming that this is true), one must also reject the existence of the Qur'an. This is because even the Qur'an did not take the form of a book during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ). It was not until the reign of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān (ؓ)[92] (d. 35 AH/ 656 CE) that copies of the Qur'an started to circulate. Furthermore, the Qur'an was not collected into a single book during the life of the Prophet (ﷺ); it was during the Caliphate of Abū Bakr (ؓ) that it was actually collected into one single book.

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[89] Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Sa'd ibn Mālik (ؓ) was a Madinan Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ). See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb,* 1671-72.

[90] Al-Azami, M. Mustafa. *Studies in Early Hadith Literature.* Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2000, pp. 22-23.

[91] Al-Azami, *Studies,* pp. 34-182.

Muṣṭafā as-Sibā'ī has pointed out that there is no doubt that the Prophet (ﷺ) gave special attention to the preservation of the Qur'an. He taught it to his Companions, who memorised it and wrote it down on animal skins, bones, rocks and parchment. By the time the Prophet (ﷺ) died, all that was needed was to collect what the Companions had preserved, both written and memorised, into a single book.

The Sunnah and Hadith were not compiled in the same way, even though they were an important part of Islamic law and teachings during and after the era of the Prophet (ﷺ) and remained so afterwards. This is because the Prophet had (ﷺ) lived among his Companions for 23 years; to record all his sayings, deeds, and approvals would have been extremely difficult and would have required many people dedicated just for that task. Such a time-consuming effort would have deprived them of their precious time with him. Instead, they opted to spend their time paying full attention to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his ways, absorbing everything they could while he was with them. They left the recording part of it for a later time, when he would no longer be amidst them. It is also well-established that writing materials at the time were scarce and writers were few; since the Qur'an was the verbatim word of Allah (ﷻ) and the eternal miracle of the Prophet (ﷺ), priority was given to the Qur'an with regards to writing.[93]

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[92] 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (ؓ) was the third Caliph as well as a Companion and son in-law of the Prophet (ﷺ). See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb,* 1037-53.

[93] as-Sibā'ī, Muṣṭafā. *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā fit-Tashrī' al-Islāmī.* Cairo: Darussalam, 2006, p. 66.

The Sunnah consists of all the Prophet's sayings, actions and approvals; to compile all this in a similar way to the compilation of the Qur'an would have taken the full commitment of the Companions to memorising the Sunnah along with the Qur'an, and this would involve great hardship. Out of fear of mixing the two by mistake, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered the Companions not to write his sayings.

Some scholars also say that the Prophet's command to not write was later abrogated by his permission to write.[94] The first command was given in Makkah, when the Muslim community was still in its infancy. However, when it later grew stronger and larger in number, and there was no fear of mixing the Qur'an with the Prophet's sayings, permission was given to write.

Consequently, the prohibition was not against writing any of his sayings, but against officially compiling them at the same time as the Qur'an. As noted earlier, there are many authentic narrations which show that some Companions did in fact write the Prophet's sayings and compiled them for their personal use. The Prophet (ﷺ) also wrote letters to the kings and leaders of his time. Simply because the Prophet (ﷺ) did not officially order the Companions to write his sayings, does not mean that they had no authority. The very fact that the Companions obeyed his command illustrates that what the Prophet (ﷺ) says must be obeyed, whether or not it is written. Just because something is written does not give it authority simply because it is written.

During the caliphate of Abū Bakr (﵁), the Companions were very strict and cautious as to what was actually admissible for inclusion in the collected Qur'an. They did not simply accept a verse to be a part of the Qur'an just because it was written; in fact, it was not accepted until the Companions had agreed upon its validity as having been told by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself that this was indeed a portion of the Qur'an. Transmitting something by memory is no less authentic and preserved than that which is written, especially coming from people like the Arabs of that era, who were known for their strong memories.[95]

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[94] as-Sibā'ī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā,* pp. 66-68.

Another hadith that is used against the Sunnah is the reported saying of the Prophet (ﷺ):

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "When you find a hadith from me, refer it to the book of Allah, if it conforms with it, accept it. If it contradicts it, then reject it."

This hadith appears in books of Hadith and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), but it is known to have been fabricated by the enemies of Islam, who only accepted it externally. They use this hadith because it indicates that the Sunnah has no authority on its own until it is confirmed by the Qur'an. Therefore, the Sunnah does not have its own legislative authority. Hadith scholars have replied to this by comparing this hadith to the Qur'an before anything else. When they compared it, they found that it contradicted the Qur'an because nowhere in the Qur'an does it say to only accept those hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) that are in agreement with the Qur'an. Therefore, they rejected it. Instead, they found the Qur'an ordering complete obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) and severely warning those who disobey him.[96] Ibn Ḥazm says:

> The first ḥadīth we will compare to the Qur'ān is the ḥadīth you mentioned, when we compared it, we found that it contradicts the Qur'ān, Allah says: {And whatever the Messenger give you take it and whatever he prohibits you refrain from it.} {Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah.}…[97]

This hadith has been narrated through different chains, which differ in wording but carry the same meaning. Ibn Ḥazm has traced all these chains and showed them to be either fabricated or weak.

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[95] as-Sibāʿī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā*, p. 153.

[96] ʿAbdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, p. 474.

[97] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, pp. 252-253.

For the sake of brevity, I will only mention the weaknesses in the chains of narration and not in the texts themselves:

1) Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʻAbdullāh is in this chain and accused of being a heretic.
2) It is a mursal hadith and contains a *majhūl*[98] narrator: al-Aṣbagh ibn Muḥammad Abū Manṣūr.
3) It is a mursal hadith and contains ʻAmr ibn Abī ʻAmr, who is a weak narrator. This chain also contains a majhool narrator.
4) Another chain contains As-ḥʻab ibn Barāz, who is a liar and whose hadiths are not accepted
5) Another chain contains two weak narrators: al-Ḥārith ibn Nabhān al-Jarmī and Muḥammad ibn ʻAbdullāh al-ʻArzamī, and also ʻAbdullāh ibn Saʻīd, who is known to be a liar. This particular narration reads: "Whatever saying reaches you that is good that I did not say, then I said it."

Ibn Ḥazm asks: "How can the Prophet say that which he did not say? Does anyone allow this other than a lying, heretical, disbelieving idiot?"[99]

Argument 4: "Hadiths were written in the third century AH."

The answer to the third argument listed above should also suffice in answering this one; however, let us look at this point in a little more detail. When Hadith rejecters and others make this argument, they allege that the sayings and deeds of the Prophet (ﷺ) had disappeared for an entire century, and later, a few men decided to try and retrieve them, having created a vacuum between them and the actual sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ). This certainly is not the case: the Prophet (ﷺ) was a man who changed the entire world in twenty-three years, his enemies were watching every move he made and listening carefully to each word he uttered. By the time he died, his followers were prepared to face the two largest armies of the time – the Persians and the Romans. His Companions loved him and sacrificed all they had for his message and teachings; they sacrificed their businesses, homes, families and lives in their defence. After his death, his Companions moved to different parts of the world and Islam spread even further. New Muslims naturally wanted to know all that they possibly could about the Prophet (ﷺ). They, therefore, travelled far and wide in order to learn more about him. Ever since the Prophet (ﷺ) had begun his mission, everything concerning him had become a matter of discussion. Had information about him been in obscurity for a period of time only to be revived in a later period, much of what he had said and done would have been lost forever. However, the truth is that every single aspect of his life had become the property of the public before it could be forgotten.

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[98] A *majhūl* (*lit.* unknown) narrator is one who does not have at least two reliable transmitters narrating from him or her.

[99] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, pp. 234-237.

Orientalists such as Schacht, Muir, Guillaume, Goldziher and others spread this idea based on their misunderstanding of the statements of early Hadith scholars. The names of the earliest compilers of Hadiths that are provided by Hadith scholars belong to the middle or later half of the second century AH. Imam Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī states:

> Know, may Allah teach us and you, that the sayings of the Prophet peace be upon him were not compiled into collections or organized in the era of the companions and the elder of their successors for two reasons: First, because in the beginning they were prohibited from doing so, as is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, for fear that some of it might get mixed with the Qur'ān, second because of their vast memories and sharp minds, and because most of them did not know how to write. Then towards the end of the era of the successors to the companions, the compilation of sayings and organization of topics began

> to spread in different towns and innovations increased from the Khawārij, Rawāfiḍ, and those who deny predestination. So the first to compile that (the ḥadīth) was Rabī' bin Sabīḥ and Sā'īd ibn Abī' 'Arūba and others. They compiled ḥadīths relating to every topic separately, until the elders of the third generation arose and organized the legal rulings.[100]

The first sentence in the statement of Ibn Ḥajar is probably what is used to spread the idea that hadiths were not written down during the life of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, there is nothing in the statement that denies that people had written things for themselves personally; all that is being stated is that there were no compilations. M. Al-Azami has stated that it is unclear who was the first to provide this information, but later on, all the scholars, even Imam adh-Dhahabi[101] (d. 748 AH/ 1348 CE) and Ibn Ḥajar, repeated the old statement without scrutinising it, even though they themselves had provided plenty of evidence against this common belief in their writings.

Iftikhar Zaman points out that perhaps M. al-Azami overlooked some texts or judged a little too quickly when he stated that 'all scholars' repeated the statement without scrutinising it. Like al-Azami, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbali[102] (d. 795/1392) makes a clear distinction between compiling and writing:[103]

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[100] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Aḥmad ibn 'Alī. *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.* Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000, p. 8.

[101] Adh-Dhahabī, Shams ad-Dīn Abū 'Abdullāh was a historian and theologian, who mainly studied Hadith and jurisprudence. See J. De Somogyī, *EI2*, art. Al-Dhahabī.

[102] Ibn Rajab, Zayn ad-Dīn Abū al-Faraj 'Abdur Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn Rajab was a Ḥanbalī Hadith scholar and jurist. See G. Makdisī, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Radjab.*

[103] Zaman, Iftikhar. "The Evolution of a Hadith: Transmission, Growth and the Science of Rijāl in a Hadith of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1991, p. 90.

> Know that the companions (may Allah be pleased with them) used to circulate the knowledge they received from the Prophet during his lifetime by memorizing it and by narrating it and there were those among them who used to write it down, as has been discussed… regarding 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Ās. Then after the Prophet passed away, some companions held that it was permissible to write knowledge, while others did not. And the successors were also divided on the issue in this manner… And those who wrote in the era of the companions and the successors did not write organized compilations, writing was only for memorization and as a review of what was memorized.[104]

This theory of recording Hadith in the second century was the result of many misconceptions, one of them being misinterpretations of words such as *tadwīn* (collecting) and *taṣnīf* (classifying according to subject), which are misunderstood to mean 'recording'.[105] Statements naming Imam az-Zuhri[106] as the first to make tadwīn of Hadith are mistranslated and misinterpreted. Orientalists and others take this to mean that Imam az-Zuhrī was the first to write Hadith; however, tadwīn means to compile, not write.[107] Imam az-Zuhrī was the first to officially compile Hadith, after being instructed by the state under the Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz[108] (d. 101 AH/ 720 CE). This does not mean that no one before him ever wrote or compiled Hadith; instead, his was the first official effort to compile Hadith. The Caliph

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[104] Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, Abdur Raḥmān. *Sharḥ 'Ilal at-Tirmidhī.* Edited by Ṣubḥī al-Ḥāmid. Baghdad: Matba'at al-Anī, 1976, pp. 64-65.

[105] Al-Azami, *Studies,* pp. 18-20

[106] Az-Zuhrī, Ibn Shihāb was one of the earliest Hadith scholars and transmitters. See M. Lecker, *EI2*, art. *Al-Zuhrī.*

[107] M. al-Azami shows in his book *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* that Imam az-Zuhrī was not to first to write or even to compile the Hadith.

[108] 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz ibn Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam was the fifth caliph of the Marwānid branch of the Umayyad dynasty, known for his piety and uprightness. See P.M. Coss, *EI2*, art. *'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz.*

'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz feared that Hadith would be lost with the death of Hadith scholars; hence, he ordered an official effort to gather Hadith. In other words, he made it a state project to write and compile Hadith, whereas compilations before this had been individual works. Furthermore, just because something is written does not mean that its preservation is ensured. Scholars of Islam never believed something to be authentic simply because it was written. Writing was allowed as a tool to help memorise, but not to replace memorisation. This is because books can be destroyed or tampered with, whereas what is preserved in the hearts and minds of the believers remains intact with no chance of destruction. If a scholar read from his book and made no mistakes, but erred when he read from memory, he would be criticised.

When the Orientalists and others began attacking Hadith, claiming that it was not written until the third century AH, modern Muslim scholars tried to refute them by digging into Islamic literature and providing evidence that it was indeed written. In fact, they found an abundance of evidence that proves this as fact. Both modern and classical Muslim scholars do not consider something authentic simply because it has been written down, and whether it is written or not does not increase or decrease the authenticity (or authority) of a hadith. In some cases, a narrator would be criticised by saying "A's narration from B is only a book".[109] When one further investigates such remarks, it becomes clear that the scholars of the past did not necessarily disapprove of writing itself; instead, it is a criticism that the narrator relies on the written material itself and if he did not hear this from the source itself, he risks narrating a corrupt text.

For scholars of Hadith to consider something authentic, it had to be through reliable Muslims in a chain of narration back to the Prophet (ﷺ). To further emphasise this point, William Graham states:

> Truth does not reside in documents, however authentic, ancient, or well-preserved, but in authentic human beings, and their

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[109] Examples can be found in books on narrators, such as Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb at-Tahdhīb*.

> personal connections with one another. Documents alone, without a line of *persons* possessed of *both* knowledge and righteousness to teach and convey them across the years, are useless as instruments of authoritative transmission. It is "the golden chain of sincere Muslims" that guarantees the faithful copying, memorizing, reciting, and understanding of texts – not only those of the *ḥadīth*, but those of the Qur'ān and all subsequent works of Muslim piety and learning.[110]

The views of the Hadith rejecters regarding the writing of Hadith are clearly influenced by Orientalists; they simply take an accusation that Orientalists have made against Hadith and repeat it. Similar to the Hadith rejecters, the Orientalists take a word and twist its meaning in order to suit their agenda. If Hadith had first been compiled or classified into subjects in the second century, this does not mean that they were not already written down. It is an intellectual technique used by those who are against Hadith to spread the alleged fact that hadiths were reported orally for two hundred years and then finally written down. Unfortunately, many Muslims also believe this; but when one investigates further, one finds out that it is not true. This argument might also make many new Muslims quickly reject Hadith because many of them have studied the Bible and know how inauthentic it is. When they have any doubt about a religious source being authentic, it will shake their faith in it.

Since Hadith rejecters do not even accept the authority of Hadith as a whole, there is no need for them to argue about its authenticity. Even if hadiths were proved authentic, they would still reject them. Certainly, there are hadiths whose authenticity is beyond doubt, such as the hadiths that are mutawātir. An example of something mutawātir is the fact that Shanghaī is a city in China. Although one may have never been to Shanghaī nor seen it with his/her eyes, so many people state that it exists that it is impossible that all of them are lying. Since such hadiths do exist and are authentic beyond any doubt, why do they still reject them? Their problem is not with the authenticity; rather, it is with the authority. To reject a mutawātir hadith is to reject the Qur'an as well, because its means of transmission was the same.

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[110] Graham, William A. "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (1993), p. 507.

In response to the Orientalist Schacht, who holds the same view as Hadith rejecters, – that hadiths were fabricated on a massive scale and projected back into the mouth of the Prophet (ﷺ), M. al-Azami states:

> Schacht asks us to believe that a massive confidence trick was perpetrated by scholars throughout the Muslim world in the second century AH This in itself may strain our credibility, given any belief in human rectitude and honesty. There is no way of proving to a cynic that scholars do not deliberately falsify records, but we may suggest that the political and geographical realities of the time militated against collusion on such a wide scale. Are we really to believe that without the benefit of the telephone, telegraph, or modern methods of transportation, scholars were able to communicate so well that the same *āḥādīth* grew up in such widely disparate areas?[111]

A text can be preserved in two ways, either by memory or in written form. Muslim scholars usually preferred the former; this is because a written text is a dead text outside the human heart. The scholars also preferred the use of memory instead of writing because this compels the student to learn at the hands of a scholar and not directly from books without any guidance. In this manner, the student-teacher relationship is always intact. If a student goes directly to the books without any guidance from a teacher, there is a high probability of misunderstanding or misinterpreting something. When a student reads books without studying with scholars, he or she cannot learn from the scholars' state of being and disposition, develop the Islamic mannerisms of seeking knowledge, or observe how knowledge is practiced.

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[111] Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 122.

Learning at the hands of a teacher has always been a part of Islamic methodology and heritage, thus the scholars wished to preserve it. Even the third Caliph 'Uthmān (ﷺ) made certain the Qur'an was written in such a fashion that it would ensure that a student would learn it directly from the teacher and not on his own. M. al-Azami says:

> Islamic methodology dictates that every student must learn directly from a teacher and is never entitled to study any text on his own; as long as this oral tradition remained, and the teacher was able to decipher the irregularities in his own handwriting, there was no risk of corruption. ..Skeletal dots (known to Arabs prior to Islam) and diacritical marks (a Muslim invention) were both absent from 'Uthmān's endeavors to independently compile the Qur'ān. By its consonant-heavy and dot-less nature, it was uniquely shielded from the guiles of anyone attempting to bypass oral scholarship and learn the Qur'ān on his own; such a person would readily be detected if he ever dared to recite in public.[112]

Since copying was an extremely tedious task in the past, a text could easily have been written incorrectly or tampered with. The scribe might have been tired while writing and, as a result, overlooked or skipped a letter, words or even a sentence. One can certainly argue that memory is not reliable either since people can easily forget; however, this is not the case when it comes to those with reliable memories, which was a condition Hadith narrators were required to meet. In addition, the vast numbers of individuals who have memorised the Qur'an and Hadith, and are in complete agreement with the minutest details, is proof of the truth of the message itself. Perhaps one individual or several might make mistakes. However, when countless numbers of people throughout the ages agree, it is solid proof of the authenticity of what they have memorised.

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[112] Al-Azami, M. Mustafa. *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments.* United Kingdom: UK Islamic Academy, 2003, pp. 147-148.

When people memorise a text of such importance, it becomes a part of their being, and they carry it to their graves. Many people, even if they have not read the lyrics of a song, memorise it and can sing it upon request without a mistake. Today, in our society, we memorise such things as the alphabet, the pledge of allegiance, and social security numbers. If someone recited the alphabet incorrectly, any first grader would immediately object and correct him or her. It may be difficult for us in the modern world to imagine people depending so much upon memory; however, we must keep in mind that the printing press did not always exist and people needed to depend upon memory much more than we do today. For instance, when one begins to depend upon a calculator to solve mathematical equations, their ability to add or subtract the simplest of numbers on their own becomes weaker. Before the invention of calculators, people did not have this problem. When we cease to use our memories, they in turn become weaker; hence, memorising small portions of anything becomes a strenuous task. However, this was not the case with the people of the past; the more one utilises his or her memory, the stronger it becomes.

Apart from memorising simply because of lack of printed material, memorising both the Qur'an and Hadith has always been a part of Islamic education and tradition. Knowledge was learned directly from teachers and not from books; students were heavily dependent on their memory. They were keen not to lose anything they had heard, and this led to them developing sharper memories. Scholars recorded their knowledge, but they did not depend on what was written; if their books were lost or contained an error, they were still able to impart their teachings correctly.

If one looks at it from another perspective, Muslims are taught to love the Prophet (ﷺ) more than they love themselves. Is it conceivable that the very people who were more than willing to give their lives and everything they possessed in order to protect the Prophet (ﷺ) and his message would distort his words? When one hears something from someone they look up to and love so much, memorising what he says becomes easy because it means so much to the person. To the Companions, every saying of the Prophet (ﷺ) was of utmost significance, not only due to their fascination with his character, but also because they firmly believed that what he taught was not from him; rather, it was and still is the command of Allah (ﷻ). This cannot be compared with memorising a text simply for academic reasons. Even the Qur'an makes it clear that not everything that is written is preserved:

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا۟
بِهِۦ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ
٧٩﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ٧٩)

﴾Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: This is from Allah, so that they may take for it a small price; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.﴿ *(Qur'an 2: 79)*

﴿يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنتُمْ
تُخْفُونَ مِنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ ... ١٥﴾ (سورة المائدة: الآية ١٥)

﴾O people of the book, indeed Our Messenger has come to you making clear to you much of what you concealed of the book…﴿
(Qur'an 5: 15)

Allah (ﷻ) has informed us that the Qur'an is preserved in the chests of the humans, not in the pages of books:

﴿وَمَا كُنتَ تَتْلُوا۟ مِن قَبْلِهِۦ مِن كِتَٰبٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُۥ بِيَمِينِكَ ۖ إِذًا لَّٱرْتَابَ
ٱلْمُبْطِلُونَ ٤٨ بَلْ هُوَ ءَايَٰتٌۢ بَيِّنَٰتٌ فِى صُدُورِ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْعِلْمَ ۚ وَمَا
يَجْحَدُ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ إِلَّا ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ٤٩﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: الآية ٤٨ – ٤٩)

﴾And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, for then could those who say untrue things have doubted. Nay, these are clear signs in the breasts of those who are granted knowledge; and none deny Our signs except the unjust.﴿
(Qur'an 29: 48- 49)

Finally, let us briefly look at the circumstances in which one of the first Hadith books, the Muwaṭṭa' of Imam Mālik[113] (d. 179 AH/ 796 CE), was compiled. This was compiled about one hundred years after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). Only about 12 to 23 years earlier, there were still some Companions alive, and there were also many successors who saw and followed these great Companions and learned from them as much as possible. There must have been some strong bonds created through their direct instruction and learning. The time span between the Prophet (ﷺ) and the successors is like that between a grandfather and his grandchildren. Thus, even if there were no concentrated efforts to learn, the people of that generation would have naturally learned about the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions, in the same way as it is normal for grandchildren to learn about their grandparents.

Considering the fact that Imam Mālik worked on his collection in the same place where the Prophet (ﷺ) spent the last ten years of his life, where every household was influenced by him, where many read these traditions openly in the Prophet's mosque and thousands of people from the Islamic world came to listen to him, is it conceivable that there was not a single person who spoke out and said that all or most of these traditions had been fabricated? Even if Imam Mālik was guilty of such a fabrication, surely those alive at the time would not have passively sat by while he made such an addition to the faith. To assume that those alive during his time knew he was doing something erroneous and did nothing to change it is paramount to accusing them of betrayal of Islam. The fact that there is no statement from anyone speaking against Imam Mālik must mean that they concurred with him and did not see what he was doing as an innovation into the religion; rather, they considered it a part of it.[114]

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[113] Mālik ibn Anas was a jurist, the Imam of the Mālikī School of law and the Imam of Madinah.

Argument 5: "Hadith scholars only criticised the chains of narration and neglected the content of the hadith."

Before we conclude, let us analyse the argument that the major failure of Hadith scholars was their neglect of the *matn* (the content, or text, of the hadith). This thought was initiated by Syed Ahmad Khan. According to him, Hadith scholars focused mainly on the chain of narration; and because this was such a difficult task, they never got around to criticising the actual text of the hadith. He also argues that successive scholars were unsuccessful in recognising the deficiency in the work of the early Hadith scholars, and because they were impressed by their achievements, they treated their works as infallible. Hadith scholars were so busy with the chain of narrators and their reliability that they totally ignored the subject of the hadith.[115] Precisely the same criticism is also made by the Orientalists; perhaps Hadith rejecters are only parroting their arguments, claiming them to be their own. This is most possibly the case, especially regarding Syed Ahmad Khan. To allow the criticism of matn on the lines suggested by the Hadith rejecters would open the door to chaos, since each person's reason is different. One person may see as a contradiction what another sees as a consensus; contradiction is in the eyes of the beholder. When looked at superficially, the argument that there was a lack of criticism of matn seems warranted and in fact true, since the reason usually given by Hadith scholars for the rejection of a hadith is a problem in the sanad and not the matn.

The first piece of evidence against this allegation is the fact that in order for a hadith to be authentic, it must not contradict a narration by someone more reliable. The scholars could not have done this if they were not familiar with the matn of all of the texts. Muṣṭafā as-Sibā'ī has criticised some approaches to matn criticism because it is taken beyond reasonable limits; he has argued that if one man reports information about another, the first thing that comes to mind is the reliability and trustworthiness of the reporter. Once one is sure that the reporter is reliable, only then does one begin to consider the report itself.

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[114] Azami, *The Sunnah in Islam*, pp. 24-27.

[115] Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, p. 97.

If the report stimulates doubt, not because of the reporter – who is reliable – but because of the report itself, one should not rush into declaring the reporter to be a liar. Instead, the right course is to suspend judgement on the narration, hoping more light will be shed on it later. He then goes on to list the conditions the scholars laid down for criticising the matn, listing a total of fifteen conditions, aside from the fact that the matn is also considered in the criticism of isnād.

When the Hadith rejecters say that they interpret the Qur'an according to reason, we must ask: what is reason and what are its limits? Is there any consensus on what does or does not constitute reason? History has shown many reasonable people who make mistakes using their reason. Instead of looking at the reason of individuals, what should be accepted is the collective reason of Hadith scholars, the masters of the field; they did not reject the role of reason in criticising Hadith. The scholars of Hadith criticism have specified signs that indicate if a hadith is fabricated. The following are some of the conditions listed by as-Sibā'ī for matn criticism:

1) It should not contradict reason in such a way that it is impossible to interpret, for example, the statement that Allah (ﷻ) does not exist.

2) It should not contradict the Qur'an, a widely established Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), or the consensus of the Muslim community, in such a manner that it cannot be interpreted.

3) It should not be a report about an event that was witnessed by a great number of people but narrated only by one person.

4) It should not contradict well-established historical facts.

5) It should not promise a great reward for a small deed, or a severe punishment for an insignificant mistake.[116]

However, if they mean that anything that reason finds strange should be rejected, this is impossible – because what one's reason classifies as strange depends on the person's culture, environment and other aspects which cannot be measured. Plenty of things may be strange to one person's reason, yet sound perfectly normal to others. If people of a thousand years ago were told that there will be a car which can travel one hundred miles per hour without the help of a horse or a mule or any other animal, and that a person only needs to get in and push his foot down on a pedal, they would find this terribly strange. Yet, today it is completely normal.

There is a difference between what is strange to reason and what is totally impossible. In Islam, there may be things that are strange to reason, but nothing in Islam is impossible to reason and understanding. If Hadith scholars found anything of that nature, they rejected it. In fact, based on this criterion, thousands of hadiths were branded as fabrications and were, as a result, rejected from the corpus of authentic Hadith collections. A great number of people do not differentiate between what reason finds strange, and what is impossible to reason. Thus, they quickly reject both: the phenomena that is strange to reason and that reason finds impossible. There is a big difference between the two. Those who wish to use reason as the only means to judge Hadith do not differentiate between what is impossible and what is simply strange; thus, they reject everything that they find strange. This way of thinking will only lead to chaos in the religion.[117]

The Hadith scholars were not concerned only with the chain of narration; they had stipulated strict conditions that the content of a hadith had to meet before they accepted it. Yet, despite these standards, one may still argue that in the works of the early Hadith scholars, one does not find much matn criticism compared to the criticism of the isnād. This leads us to the question: why is matn criticism so hard to find?

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[116] as-Sibā'ī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā,* pp. 251-252.

[117] as-Sibā'ī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā*, pp. 44-47.

Jonathan Brown points out that in the Islamic intellectual history, there existed a well-known conflict between two groups, one of which relied on the material transmitted from the early Muslim generations to interpret Islamic law and creed. This school is known as *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (the people of Hadith). The other is the one that leaned towards a Hellenistic rationalist approach – this group includes *Ahl al-Kalām*, *Jahmiyyah* and other rationalists. These groups perceived Ahl al-Ḥadīth as irrational literalists, ridiculously holding on to the hadiths whose meaning they did not understand, but whose chains they were eternally obsessed with. Ahl al-Ḥadīth perceived their opponents as arrogant heretics, who abandoned the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) for their own feeble minds. The opponents of Ahl al-Ḥadīth glorified reason and used it to determine the correct interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith. On the other hand, Ahl al-Ḥadīth held that only through the isnād can we guarantee a pure Islam and rise above the heresies of the human mind; otherwise, it would allow the human mind too much freedom in defining religion. If a hadith is proven to originate from the Prophet (ﷺ), Muslims should listen to it and obey.[118]

If the sanad of a hadith is authentic, the matn must also be authentic. If there was a problem in the content, that meant there must be a problem in the chain. Both early and late scholars did criticise hadiths simply because of the content; however, they usually found the root of the problem in the chain itself. It is true that the criticism of matn seems rare in early Hadith literature, but it is not due to the negligence of Hadith scholars. The reason why they usually pointed the problem out in the chain instead of the content is obvious. They felt themselves locked in a struggle with the rationalists, who scorned their reliance on the chain and believed that content criticism was the only way to judge the authenticity of a hadith. To acknowledge a problem in the meaning of a hadith without arriving at a conclusion through a criticism of the isnād would affirm the rationalist methodology. This is why matn criticism had to be concealed under the cover of isnād criticism.[119]

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[118] Brown, *How We Know Early Hadith Critics Did Matn Criticism*, pp. 164-165.

Thus, when early Hadith scholars such as Imam Bukhari criticised a hadith, they might not have explained the exact basis on which they criticised it – the sanad or the matn. This ambiguity may be frustrating to later scholars, but it is exactly what the early scholars intended – to conceal matn criticism from opponents who wished to legitimise it as the only means for authenticating the Hadith.[120] In other words, in order to conceal the criticism of content, the scholar would find fault in the sanad, where the problem essentially existed.

In his article, Jonathan Brown demonstrates the high correlation between hadiths found in early books of transmitter criticism and those found in later books of fabricated Hadith with explicit matn criticism. He illustrates that early Hadith scholars engaged in matn criticism far more than appears to have been the case, due to their disguising it in the language of isnād criticism.[121]

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[119] Brown, *How We Know Early Hadith Critics Did Matn Criticism*, p. 183.

[120] Brown, *How We Know Early Hadith Critics Did Matn Criticism*, p. 175.

[121] Brown, *How We Know Early Hadith Critics Did Matn Criticism*, pp. 143-184.

Chapter Six

Obey Allah (ﷻ) and Obey the Messenger (ﷺ)

The Qur'an contains the command to obey the Messenger (ﷺ) in about forty different places. In sūrat ash-Shu'arā' alone, Prophets Noah (عليه السلام), Hūd (عليه السلام), Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام), Lot (عليه السلام) and Shu'ayb (عليه السلام) all tell their people:

﴿ فَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ﴿١٠٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة شعراء: الآية ١٠٨)

﴾So fear Allah and obey me.﴿ *(Qur'an 26: 108)*[122]

If the orders of the Messenger are not known, he cannot be obeyed. Hadith rejecters believe that by following the Qur'an, one is following the Messenger (ﷺ), thus conceding for the Messenger (ﷺ) no authority outside the Qur'an. In other words, they try to interpret the word 'Messenger' as the Qur'an. This claim is extremely ignorant and originates from a lack of knowledge of the Arabic language, for the call to obey the Messenger is nothing other than obeying his Sunnah.

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[122] The same command has been repeated in verses 110, 126, 144, 150, 163, and 179 of the same chapter.

Hadith rejecters have argued that the Prophet (ﷺ) can be obeyed solely by obeying the Qur'an. However, the command to follow the Qur'an is different from the command to obey the Messenger (ﷺ). If Allah (ﷻ) only wanted us to obey the instructions in the Qur'an, paying no heed to obedience to the Messenger (ﷺ), He would have said so. When Allah (ﷻ) commands us to 'obey the Messenger', it means to obey him in all circumstances, whether the command is from him directly, or he is conveying a divine command from Allah (ﷻ). Obedience to the Messenger is implemented out of obedience to Allah (ﷻ); however, the commands come from the Prophet (ﷺ).

Take an example from everyday life: if a father tells his child to obey his mother, the father does not mean to obey her only when she says, "Your father said xyz". Instead, the father means that all her orders should be obeyed. Thus, by obeying his mother, the child is obeying his father as well. However, the command of obedience came from the father, whereas the specific commands as to what the child must do come from the mother.

In other words, when Allah (ﷻ) orders us to obey the Messenger (ﷺ), it does not mean to obey him only when he recites the Qur'an or gives a command that is found in it; obedience to the Messenger means that if the Prophet (ﷺ) commands something, then Allah (ﷻ) has made the obedience of that command compulsory on Muslims. Hence, in both circumstances, whether the command is found in the Qur'an or has been initiated from the Prophet (ﷺ), obeying them is in fact akin to obeying Allah (ﷻ).[123]

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was sent to teach the Qur'an by practical example. One can have a map, but without a guide who teaches one how to properly read it, one may still get lost. The Qur'an is the map, and the Prophet (ﷺ) is the guide. His duty was to teach how the 'map' could be read correctly. If individuals do not follow the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) when it comes to reading or interpreting the map, then they will definitely get lost; they will all have their own methods of reading and interpretation. The following verses tell us that one cannot separate the obedience of Allah (ﷻ) from the obedience of the Messenger (ﷺ):

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[123] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah*, p. 244.

﴿ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكۡفُرُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِۦ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن يُفَرِّقُواْ بَيۡنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِۦ
وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤۡمِنُ بِبَعۡضٖ وَنَكۡفُرُ بِبَعۡضٖ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن يَتَّخِذُواْ بَيۡنَ ذَٰلِكَ
سَبِيلًا ١٥٠ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡكَٰفِرُونَ حَقّٗاۚ وَأَعۡتَدۡنَا لِلۡكَٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٗا مُّهِينٗا
١٥١ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ١٥٠ – ١٥١)

﴿Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to separate between Allah and His messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and desire to take a course in between that. These are truly the unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful punishment.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 150-151)*

Muhammad Ismā'īl As-Salafī vividly points out that these verses mention reasons for disbelief. He makes it clear that rejecting a messenger and rejecting Allah (ﷻ) are both sufficient grounds for one to be considered a disbeliever. The belief in Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) are on equal grounds, for one is not a believer if he or she rejects either of them. It is also known that Allah (ﷻ) and the Messenger (ﷺ) are not one in their being; Allah (ﷻ) is the Creator and Master, while the Messenger (ﷺ) is a creation and a servant. The Prophet (ﷺ) never claimed that he and Allah (ﷻ) were one; instead, he always emphasised that he was simply a servant of Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, the portion of the verse that states ﴿and wish to separate between Allah and His messengers﴾ does not mean separation in their beings, because it is obvious that the two are completely different and separate. The verse must therefore mean those who wish to differentiate between them with regards to obedience -- similar to those who state that one must only obey Allah (ﷻ) and not the messengers.[124] The Qur`an has mentioned the hypocrites as doing the following:

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ وَإِلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنكَ صُدُودًا ٦١ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٦١)

﴾And when it is said to them: Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger, you see the hypocrites turning away from you with a version.﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 61)*

It is evident that the Qur`an by itself can hold many interpretations. However, when the explanations of the Messenger are considered along with the Qur`an, it closes the door in the path of all those who seek to interpret it according to their desires. It is because of this that the hypocrites distinguish between Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) regarding obedience. When the Sunnah is rendered non-authoritative, the hypocrites can then escape from the true explanation and implementation of the Qur`an, thus enabling them to live as they please. However, the Qur`an itself clarifies that the Sunnah is equal in authority to the Qur`an and supports it fully. Accordingly, the next verse describes the true believers:

﴿ ... وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا۟ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ... ١٥٢ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ١٥٢)

﴾...And they do not make a distinction between any of them...﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 152)*

The true believers are those who make no distinction between obeying Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) because they deem it mandatory to obey both of them. They know that the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) are just as authoritative as the words of Allah (ﷻ) in the Qur`an, and that obedience to each of them, in reality, is not of a separate nature, but of equal importance in relation to the other.[125]

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[124] As-Salafī, Muḥammad Ismā'īl. *Ḥujjiyyat al-Ḥadīth an-Nabawī Majmū' Maqālāt Nafīsa fid-Difā' an as-Sunnah ash-Sharīfa.* Edited by Ḥasan Muqtaḍa al-Azharī. Kuwait: Ghirās, 2007, pp. 51-52.

[125] As-Salafī, *Ḥujjiyyat al-Ḥadīth an-Nabawī*, p. 129.

﴿ مَّن يُطِعِ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ ٱللَّهَ ... ﴿٨٠﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٨٠)

﴿Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah…﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 80)*

Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an:

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِي ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ ۖ فَإِن
تَنَٰزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ ۚ
ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٥٩﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٥٩)

﴿Oh you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. If you differ in anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger if you believe in Allah and the last day; that is better and the best interpretation.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 59)*

The Qur'an instructs that if we dispute in anything, even in how to read or interpret the Qur'an, then it must be referred to both Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). The word used at the end of the verse is *ta'wīl*, which means interpretation. When disputes arise as to what the Qur'an means, we must refer to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), or else we will be lost because everyone will have his or her own interpretation. Muhammad Asad has stated:

> In fact, we must regard the sunnah as the only valid explanation of the Qur'ānic teachings, the only means to avoid dissensions concerning their interpretation and adaptation to practical use. Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān have an allegorical meaning and could be understood in different ways unless there was some definite system of interpretation. And there are, furthermore, many items of practical importance not explicitly dealt with in the Qur'ān.[126]

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[126] Asad, Muhammad. "Social and Cultural Realities of the Sunnah." In *Hadith and Sunnah – Ideals and Realities*. Edited by P. K. Koya. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1996, p. 236.

This verse demonstrates that the community was not supposed to ask whomever they liked to settle their disputes. Instead, they had to go to the Prophet (ﷺ), whose judgements had unquestionable and binding legal authority. It also shows that obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) was not given to him as a leader; instead, it was given to him as a Messenger, since the command is to obey the Messenger. Muhammad (ﷺ) is the Messenger for all times and people; had the order been to Muhammad (ﷺ) as a leader, Allah (ﷻ) could have just said 'obey Muhammad' or He could have limited it to obeying the leaders. However, since Allah (ﷻ) has made a distinction between the Messenger and the leaders, we can only conclude that Muslims were asked to obey him as a messenger for all humankind, not simply as a leader. When Muslims differ with their rulers, they are ordered to refer their matter to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). This means that the Messenger (ﷺ) must be referred to always, not only during his lifetime. In this verse, the command 'obey' has been placed before the word 'Allah' and before 'Messenger', but not before 'those in authority'; this is because obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) is unconditional. However, in the case of those in authority, one can obey them only on the condition that they are not ordering disobedience of Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ).

Ibn al-Qayyim[127] (d. 751 AH/ 1350 CE) has pointed out that Allah (ﷻ) did not repeat the command 'obey' before mentioning those in authority. He has kept the word 'obey' out when mentioning those in positions of authority, making obedience to them directly connected with the obedience of Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), but only on the condition that they [that is, those in authority] are essentially obeying Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) then goes on to say that if a dispute arises, it should be referred to

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[127] Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Zar'ī al-Ḥanbalī was a famous Damascene theologian and jurist, known as the most devout student of Ibn Taymiyyah. See H. Laoust, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Ḳayyim Al-Djawzī*.

Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) if the disputants are true believers. The only way that disputes can be taken back to the Prophet (ﷺ) after his death is by returning to the Sunnah and Hadith.[128]

Ibn Ḥazm has pointed out that the word 'refer' in the aforementioned verse means to refer to the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ). This is a directive for every human until the end of time; it is not limited to those who were alive during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is well-known that we cannot hear the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) except through narrations. Even if one were to argue that this verse is addressing only those who were able to meet the Prophet (ﷺ), he/she cannot say the same about Allah (ﷻ), for no one can meet or speak to Allah (ﷻ) in this life. Consequently, this line of thinking (that is, only those living during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) could refer to him) is false. The command 'refer' in this verse means to return to the speech of Allah (ﷻ), which is the Qur'an, and the speech of the Messenger (ﷺ) that was passed down to us, which is available only in the form of Hadith. There is nothing in this verse that indicates the necessity of meeting the Messenger; it is only telling us to refer to him. What is meant by referring to him is to return to the orders of Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger, not their beings.[129]

This verse also reveals that one can differ with those in authority over them; however, one cannot differ with the Prophet (ﷺ). This is understood because the verse limits differing to those in authority. Had the Prophet's sayings and commands not been authoritative, differing with him would be permissible just as it is with the leaders when they do not conform to the commands of Allah (ﷻ). However, since his commands are always in conformity with the will of Allah (ﷻ), complete obedience to him is necessary. When there is any difference, minor or major, it must be referred to Allah (ﷻ) and the

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[128] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr. *I'lām al-Muwaqi'īn 'ar-Rab al-'ālamīn.* Egypt: al-Maktabah at-Tijāriyyah, 1955, p. 48.

[129] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, pp. 87-88.

Messenger (ﷺ).[130] The verse instructs Muslims to return to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) ﴾if you believe in Allah and the last day﴿. If one does not return to Allah (ﷻ) and the Messenger (ﷺ), the verse renders the person's faith as invalid.

Their denial of Hadith also leads the Hadith rejecters to deny that the Prophet (ﷺ) is a legislator, whose sayings are legally binding on Muslims; however, the Qur'an proves the opposite.

Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ ٱلرَّسُولَ ٱلنَّبِيَّ ٱلْأُمِّيَّ ٱلَّذِى يَجِدُونَهُۥ مَكْتُوبًا عِندَهُمْ فِى
ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةِ وَٱلْإِنجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُم بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَىٰهُمْ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ
ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْخَبَٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَٱلْأَغْلَٰلَ ٱلَّتِى كَانَتْ
عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِهِۦ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَٱتَّبَعُوا۟ ٱلنُّورَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ مَعَهُۥٓ ۙ
أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: الآية ١٥٧)

﴾Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet whom they find written down in the Torah and Injīl [Gospel], who orders them to good and forbids them the evil, and makes lawful for them the pure things, and makes unlawful for them the impure things, and relieves them of their burdens and shackles that were on them. So, those who believe in him and honour him, and help him, and follow the light that has been sent down with him, they are the successful.﴿

(Qur'an 7: 157)

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[130] There is nothing in the Prophet's life that is not legally relevant; the mere fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) did something, even if it was his personal preference, establishes its permissibility. Consequently, his life and statements cannot be separated from law. However, it is important to distinguish between what the Prophet (ﷺ) commands in his capacity as a human being and what he commands based on revelation from Allah (ﷻ). When speaking of the latter, he must be obeyed without question, but the former is not binding.

This verse makes it clear that the Prophet (ﷺ) is indeed a legislator. The role of ordering good and forbidding evil has been separated from making the pure lawful and the impure unlawful. The former is about what has already been established, and the latter is about making new laws which are attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ), not the Qur'an.

It is fallacious to argue that ﴾makes lawful for them the pure things, and makes unlawful for them the impure things﴿ refers to the rules already in the Qur'an, because pronouncing the law is different from making it. The verse emphasises the belief in the Prophet (ﷺ), meaning all his functions and roles, including the role of legislator. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ قَـٰتِلُوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَلَا بِٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ
ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥ ... ۝٢٩ ﴾ (سورة توبة: الآية ٢٩)

﴾Fight those who do not believe in Allah and the last day and who do not hold unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful...﴿ *(Qur'an 9: 29)*

This verse shows that it is compulsory to abstain from what both Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) have made unlawful. Allah (ﷻ) does not restrict to Himself the authority of making things unlawful; He extends it to his Messenger (ﷺ) as well.

Allah (ﷻ) further says:

﴿ وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذ ظَّلَمُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ
جَآءُوكَ فَٱسْتَغْفَرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا ۝٦٤ ﴾

(سورة النساء: الآية ٦٤)

﴾And We did not send any Messenger except that he be obeyed with the permission of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto you and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful.❵ *(Qur'an 4: 64)*

The reason Messengers were sent was to be obeyed, and they were given this position by the permission of Allah (ﷻ). If one believes in the Messenger but rejects the fact that the Messenger is to be obeyed, such a person is rejecting the very reason the Messenger was sent. Not every Messenger who was sent had a book, yet Allah (ﷻ) still ordered that they be obeyed. If a Messenger had no authority outside the book, then why would Allah (ﷻ) order obedience to them? Messengers must have had to give guidance, commands, and legislation to their people, thus it is impractical and unrealistic to limit the role of Messengers to reciting a book. Allah (ﷻ) sent Mūsā (عليه السلام) to the Pharaoh, who was punished for disobeying Mūsā (عليه السلام) and not believing in Allah (ﷻ). Yet, the Qur'an makes it clear that Mūsā (عليه السلام) received the book only after the Pharaoh was punished:

﴿ ولقد ءاتينا موسى ٱلكتب من بعد ما أهلكنا ٱلقرون ٱلأولى بصآئر
للناس وهدى ورحمة لعلهم يتذكرون ﴿٤٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة القصص: الآية ٤٣)

❴And certainly We gave Mūsā the book after We had destroyed the former generations, clear arguments for men and a guidance and a mercy, that they may be mindful.❵ *(Qur'an 28: 43)*

Thus, the Pharaoh was destroyed for disobeying the Sunnah of Mūsā (عليه السلام).

It should also be pointed out that the command to obey Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger always comes in the context of other commands. For example, verse 32 of sūrat Āl 'Imrān follows a verse that warns Muslims not to make alliances with disbelievers instead of Muslims; verse 132 of Āl 'Imrān comes after a prohibition of usury; verse 13 of sūrat an-Nisā' comes after rules on inheritance and marriage; and the same applies to all the other verses that tell us to obey Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). This observation shows that the obedience being emphasised is to Allah's commands in the Qur'an and to the Prophet's teachings regarding them.[131]

Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ ٱللَّهَ فَٱتَّبِعُونِى يُحْبِبْكُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ ...

٣١ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: الآية ٣١)

﴾Say: If you love Allah then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive your sins...﴿ *(Qur'an 3: 31)*

Allah (ﷻ) could have said something like, "If you love Allah (ﷻ), follow the Qur'an and He will love you", but He did not say that. He made the the act of following the Messenger a condition for His love. The only way to achieve the love of Allah (ﷻ) is through following the Messenger (ﷺ). Hadith rejecters claim that they love Allah (ﷻ), yet they reject the authority of the Messenger (ﷺ), which is the path to His love. The word used in the verse is *ittibā'*, which means to follow. When people follow someone else, they do everything he or she does, regardless of whether the person commands them to do it or not. The difference between *aṭī'ū* (obey) and *ittibā'* (follow) is that obedience is possible only when there is a command, while following is done in every aspect, regardless of whether there is a command or not. To claim that the words ﴾follow me﴿ in the above verse mean simply listening to the Qur'an is absurd. Instead, they must mean to follow him in every aspect of his life – to take him as an example, leader, and role model. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ وَإِلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ ٱلْمُنَـٰفِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ

عَنكَ صُدُودًا ٦١ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٦١)

﴾And when it is said to them: Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger, you see the hypocrites turning away from you with aversion.﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 61)*

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[131] Lang, *Losing My Religion,* pp. 194-195.

We see by this verse that Muslims are called to two separate things: the revelation which Allah (ﷻ) has revealed and the Messenger (ﷺ). We must also submit to the orders and person of the Messenger (ﷺ). Had we been asked to submit only to what Allah (ﷻ) revealed, there would be no purpose in mentioning coming to the Messenger (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) has termed turning away from the Messenger (ﷺ) hypocrisy, which is the attribute that He despises the most.

The Qur'an has never mentioned obedience to Allah (ﷻ) alone without mentioning obedience to the Messenger as well. Expounding on this point, Habib-ur-Rahman Azami says:

> It is noteworthy that whenever the 'obedience to Allah' is mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, it is always followed by 'obedience of the Prophet' which has never been missed even in a single verse. There is no verse in the entire book where 'obedience of Allah' has been mentioned alone with no reference to the 'Obedience of the Messenger'. On the contrary, there are some verses where only 'obedience to the Messenger' have been mentioned, and there is no reference to the 'obedience of Allah': And establish the salah and pay Zakah and obey the Prophet, so that you may be blessed. (24:56) And if you obey him (the Prophet) you shall find the right path. (24:54) On that day when those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish that the earth might be leveled with them. (4:42)[132]

Lang has correctly stated that there are several verses in the Qur'an which have issued commands that can be used to argue that Muslims should and will imitate the Prophet's general behaviour. There are verses that are directed specifically to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his family, such as verses 50 to 53 in sūrat al-Aḥzāb, which allow him to have more than four wives, prohibit him from divorcing any of his wives in order to marry a new one, and prohibit the believers from marrying his wives after his death. The Qur'an has also stated that the Prophet (ﷺ):

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[132] Azami, *The Sunnah in Islam*, p. 15.

﴿... أَوْلَىٰ بِٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَٰجُهُۥٓ أُمَّهَٰتُهُمْ ... ﴿٦﴾﴾

(سورة الأحزاب: الآية ٦)

﴿...is closer to the believers than themselves, and his wives are their mothers...﴾ *(Qur'an 33: 6)*

It has also informed his wives that:

﴿... لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ ٱلنِّسَآءِ ... ﴿٣٢﴾﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: الآية ٣٢)

﴿...You are not like any other women...﴾ *(Qur'an 33: 32)*

These verses about specific aspects of the Prophet's life that do not need to be followed would not be necessary if it were the Qur'an's position that Muslims should disregard actions of his that are not mentioned in the Qur'an; if this were the case, then the Prophet (ﷺ) could have been given personal non-Qur'anic inspiration on these matters, with no mention of them being made in the Qur'an. The fact that these verses single out some details of the Prophet's life in which it is not required that Muslims imitate him indicates that the rest of his actions should be followed.[133]

If the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) did not imitate his actions in addition to the Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) would not have needed to reveal verses specifying which actions are exclusively for the Prophet (ﷺ). The verses quoted above show that the Companions were following him and did perceive his actions as a source of law. Allah (ﷻ) has also said:

﴿مَّن يُطِعِ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ ٱللَّهَ ... ﴿٨٠﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٨٠)

﴿Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah...﴾
(Qur'an 4: 80)

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[133] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 196.

The commands of Allah (ﷻ) and the commands of the Prophet (ﷺ) are essentially one. In the aforementioned verse, Allah (ﷻ) did not specify that the Messenger is to be obeyed in only certain things, such as when he recites the Qur'an. The Qur'an tells us that those who go against the Prophet's orders will reap a severe punishment:

﴿ لَّا تَجۡعَلُواْ دُعَآءَ ٱلرَّسُولِ بَيۡنَكُمۡ كَدُعَآءِ بَعۡضِكُم بَعۡضًاۚ قَدۡ يَعۡلَمُ ٱللَّهُ
ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَسَلَّلُونَ مِنكُمۡ لِوَاذًاۚ فَلۡيَحۡذَرِ ٱلَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنۡ أَمۡرِهِۦٓ أَن
تُصِيبَهُمۡ فِتۡنَةٌ أَوۡ يُصِيبَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة نور: الآية ٦٣)

﴿Do not let the Messenger's calling [you] among you be like your calling one to the other; Allah indeed knows those who steal away from among you, concealing themselves; therefore let those who go against His orders beware that a trial or severe punishment befall them.﴾ *(Qur'an 24: 63)*

This verse shows that the speech or the call of the Messenger is different from that of other people. One has the choice to not listen to other humans; however, the Prophet (ﷺ) is someone who must always be obeyed. Allah (ﷻ) has also said in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَأَقِيمُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُواْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُرۡحَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ ﴾

(سورة نور: الآية ٥٦)

﴿And establish the ṣalāh and give the zakāh and obey the Messenger so that you may have mercy.﴾ *(Qur'an 24: 56)*

This verse demonstrates that obedience to the Messenger (ﷺ) is as compulsory as are ṣalāh and zakāh.

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَلَا تَوَلَّوۡاْ عَنۡهُ وَأَنتُمۡ تَسۡمَعُونَ
﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُواْ كَٱلَّذِينَ قَالُواْ سَمِعۡنَا وَهُمۡ لَا يَسۡمَعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ ﴾

(سورة أنفال: الآية ٢٠ — ٢١)

﴾O you who believe: Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn back from him while you hear. And do not be like those who say, we hear, and they hear not.﴿ *(Qur'an 8: 20- 21)*

This verse teaches us that it is not enough to claim obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) without following his commands. Those who find it difficult to obey his commands begin to make excuses for not obeying them; thus, they turn away while they are listening.

The Qur'an informs us that the Prophet (ﷺ) is to judge between people in their disputes:

﴿ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي
أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٦٥)

﴾Nay, by your Lord, they will never believe until they let you judge in their disputes, then they will not find any agitation in what you have judged and they will submit completely.﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 65)*

The Prophet's judgements about different disputes that came to him could not have been reached simply by reciting the Qur'an. Instead, he gave different verdicts for different cases based on the Qur'an and his wisdom combined. Where can we find these verdicts and judgements in the Qur'an? It does not make sense for the Prophet (ﷺ) to make all his judgements simply by reciting verses from the Qur'an. Rather, he would use his wisdom and guidance from Allah (ﷻ) to make a decision. When a judge makes a judgement, the parties involved must follow his judgements. However, submitting to his judgements is not a condition for being a Muslim. However, this verse clearly states that anyone who does not accept the Prophet's judgements is not a believer. Ibn al-Qayyim points out that in this verse, Allah (ﷻ) has sworn by His own name that one is not a believer until he or she does three things: lets the Prophet (ﷺ) judge in disputes, does not become agitated with his judgements, and submits completely to the ultimate judgement; disregarding any of these three elements results in a return to disbelief. When

Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) decide something, it is not for a believer to choose something else. Those who choose according to their wants and desires have gone astray in manifest error.[134] With this verse, Allah (ﷻ) negates the faith of those who do not submit to the ruling of the Messenger (ﷺ). Although He did not associate it with their rejecting the judgement of the Qur'an, to reject the ruling of the Messenger ultimately means rejecting the judgement of the Qur'an.

﴿إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ ٱللَّهَ ... ۝﴾ (سورة الفتح: الآية ١٠)

Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿Surely those who swear allegiance to you – they swear allegiance to Allah...﴾ *(Qur'an 48: 10)*

Here, Allah (ﷻ) has described those giving allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ) as giving allegiance to Him. This establishes the fact that obeying the Prophet (ﷺ) is in turn obeying Allah (ﷻ), and following him is following Allah (ﷻ). Later in the same chapter, Allah (ﷻ) has stated:

﴿لَّقَدْ رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ ... ۝﴾

(سورة الفتح: الآية ١٨)

﴿Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you...﴾ *(Qur'an 48: 18)*

Allah (ﷻ) was pleased with the believers who swore allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ), and they were in reality also pledging their allegiance to Allah (ﷻ). Nowhere in the Qur'an do we find the command to swear allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ), yet the Companions did it and Allah (ﷻ) was pleased with them. If they were only to do what the Qur'an has commanded, why would Allah (ﷻ) be pleased with them? This must mean that the Prophet (ﷺ) had asked them to swear allegiance and as a result of their obedience, Allah (ﷻ) was pleased with them.

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[134] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *I'lām al-Muwaqi'īn,* p. 51.

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥٓ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ ٱلْخِيَرَةُ
مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَن يَعْصِ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَٰلًا مُّبِينًا ٣٦﴾

(سورة الأحزاب: الآية ٣٦)

The Qur'an has also said:

﴿It is not befitting for a believing male or believing female, if Allah and His Messenger decide a matter, that they [the believers] have a choice in the matter. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has gone astray into manifest error.﴾ *(Qur'an 33: 36)*

Commenting on this verse, Muhammad Taqī Usmanī says:

> Here, the decisions of Allah and the Messenger both have been declared binding on the believers. It is worth noting that the word 'and' occurring between 'Allah' and 'His Messenger' carries both conjunctive and disjunctive meanings. It cannot be held to give conjunctive sense only, because in that case it will exclude the decision of Allah unless it is combined with the decision of the Messenger – a construction too fallacious to be imagined in the divine expression. The only reasonable construction, therefore, is to take the word 'and' in both conjunctive and disjunctive meanings. The sense is that whatever Allah or His Messenger, any one or both of them, decide a matter, the believers have no choice except to submit to their decision.[135]

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[135] Usmani, *The Authority of Sunnah*, pp. 48-49.

The Qur'an leaves no doubt that the Prophet (ﷺ) is guided and on the straight path. Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:

﴿ إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝٣ عَلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ۝٤ ﴾ (سورة يسين: الآية٣ - ٤)

﴿You are indeed of the Messengers, on a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 36: 3-4)*

﴿ ... وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِىٓ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ۝٥٢ ﴾ (سورة شورى: الآية٥٢)

﴿...You indeed guide to a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 52)*

﴿ مَن يَهْدِ ٱللَّهُ فَهُوَ ٱلْمُهْتَدِى ... ۝١٧٨ ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: الآية ١٧٨)

﴿He whom Allah guides, he indeed is led aright...﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 178)*

These verses have established that the Prophet (ﷺ) was permanently guided. This guidance was not limited to receiving and delivering the Qur'an. The Hadith rejecters not only limit the Prophet's guidance to receiving and delivering the Qur'an, but also claim that the rest of his activities were only done as a leader, thus giving them no permanent importance. How can the Prophet (ﷺ) guide people if he himself is not guided? In the verse quoted above, Allah (ﷻ) does not say that the Qur'an guides to the straight path, although it does; rather, He states that the Prophet (ﷺ) guides to the straight path. It is clear from these verses that the Prophet (ﷺ) was always guided by Allah (ﷻ), and that this guidance was not limited to receiving and delivering the Qur'an. When Allah (ﷻ) says He guides someone, He does not limit it. However, the Hadith rejecters not only argue that Allah's guidance upon His Messenger (ﷺ) is restricted to the Qur'an, but also that his role is limited to delivering the Qur'an. They claim that his other deeds were only emulated because he was the head of the community, so they have no importance after his death. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تُقَدِّمُوا۟ بَيْنَ يَدَىِ ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَرْفَعُوٓا۟ أَصْوَٰتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ ٱلنَّبِىِّ وَلَا
تَجْهَرُوا۟ لَهُۥ بِٱلْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَـٰلُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا
تَشْعُرُونَ ۝٢ ﴾ (سورة حجرات: الآية١ – ٢)

﴿O you who believe! Put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger; but fear Allah: for Allah is He Who hears and knows all things. O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak loudly to him as you speak loudly to one another, lest your deeds became null while you do not perceive.﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 1-2)*

Commenting on the aforementioned two verses, Ibn al-Qayyim has said:

> Allah is teaching us not to speak before the Prophet peace be upon him speaks, not to make a decision before he makes a decision, not to command until he commands. If raising their voices over his (the Prophet's) voice is a reason to have their deeds nullified, how about when they put their views, reason, likes, politics, and customs before those of the Prophet peace be upon him and raising them over his?! Is this not more of a reason for their deeds to be nullified?! Allah the High says: Only those are believers who believe in Allah and His Messenger, and when they are with him on a momentous affair they go not away until they have asked his permission.[136] If Allah made it a condition of faith that they not go anywhere except with his permission, then it is more important that they not go to any saying or school of thought except after his permission.[137]

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[136] See Qur'an 24: 62.

[137] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *I'lām al-Muwaqi'īn,* pp. 51-52.

Describing the hypocrites, Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ وَيَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَبِٱلرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّىٰ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ
ذَٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَآ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ بِٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَإِذَا دُعُوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ
إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَإِن يَكُن لَّهُمُ ٱلْحَقُّ يَأْتُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾
أَفِى قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ أَمِ ٱرْتَابُوٓا۟ أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَن يَحِيفَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولُهُۥ ۚ بَلْ
أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ
وَرَسُولِهِۦ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن يَقُولُوا۟ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۚ وَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ
﴿٥١﴾ وَمَن يُطِعِ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَيَخْشَ ٱللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْفَآئِزُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾
وَأَقْسَمُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَٰنِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ ۖ قُل لَّا تُقْسِمُوا۟ ۖ طَاعَةٌ
مَّعْرُوفَةٌ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قُلْ أَطِيعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا۟ ٱلرَّسُولَ ۖ
فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُم مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ ۖ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا۟ ۚ
وَمَا عَلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ إِلَّا ٱلْبَلَٰغُ ٱلْمُبِينُ ﴿٥٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة نور: الآية ٤٧ - ٥٤)

﴾And they say: We believe in Allah and in the Messenger and we obey; then a party of them turns back away after that, and these are not believers. And when they are summoned to Allah and His Messenger, in order that he may judge between them, behold some of them turn aside. And if the truth be on their side, they come to him quickly, submitting. Is it that there is a disease in their hearts? Or do they doubt, or are they in fear, that Allah and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? Nay, it is they themselves who do wrong. The response of the believers, when they are invited to Allah and His Messenger that he may judge between them is only to say: We hear and we obey; and these are the successful. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, and fears Allah, and is careful of [his duty to]

Him, such are the achievers. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that if you command them they would certainly go forth. Say: Do not swear; obedience is [more] reasonable; verily, Allah is well acquainted with all that you do. Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger; but if you turn back, then on him rests that which is imposed on him and on you rests that which is imposed on you; and if you obey him, you are on the right way; and nothing rests on the Messenger but clear delivering [of the message].﴿

(Qur'an 24: 47- 54)

The aforementioned verses make it crystal clear that obedience to the Messenger (ﷺ) is obligatory. Allah (ﷻ) has blamed the hypocrites for turning their backs when asked to call the Prophet (ﷺ) to judge between them. Yet, if his sayings or judgement is in their favour, they readily, willingly and submissively come to him. These verses have also pointed out that the Muslims during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) were obeying not only the Qur'an, but the Prophet's commands as well; otherwise the hypocrites would not have sworn their strongest oaths that if he ordered them they would go out and fight. This statement of the hypocrites proves that the Prophet's command has authority, because they vowed that once he commands them to go out, they would go forth in the path of Allah (ﷻ). Had the Prophet's command been of no value, they would have argued that they would go out once a verse was revealed to command them, once again revealing their own hypocrisy in a plea for excuse of exemption. These verses have proved false the argument that obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) simply means obeying the Qur'an, for the Qur'an itself has informed us that the Prophet's commands are authoritative and must be obeyed.

The one who denies the authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his sayings is in reality denying the Qur'an. Such a person is not only rejecting the Sunnah, but rejecting Islam in its entirety. The foundation of Islam is the Qur'an, and no one can declare anything to be part of the Qur'an while completely rejecting the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ). This is because we would not know what constitutes the Qur'an itself without the Prophet (ﷺ) informing us of it. We only know what the Qur'an is because of his declaring it as such. Thus, his statement that such-and-such words are of the Qur'an is part of the Sunnah/Hadith that such people completely reject. It is evident that completely rejecting Hadith and Sunnah is nothing other than the deception of those who are trying to pull Islam out by the roots.

One may argue that it is not the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) that dictate what the direct speech of Allah (ﷻ) is. Instead, the Qur'an itself is a miracle and is self-evident proof that it is from Allah (ﷻ). This is true regarding the Qur'an in its entirety, perhaps one chapter, or even three verses. When one looks at these, one does not need the Messenger to say it is from Allah (ﷻ), since they are miracles and proof in and of themselves. However, this is not true for smaller portions such as two verses, one verse, or part of a verse; they are not miracles alone, until the Prophet (ﷺ) informs us that they are indeed a part of the Qur'an.[138] Ultimately, nothing can be considered part of the Qur'an unless the Prophet (ﷺ) says it is, therefore his sayings are authoritative. Anyone who denies his sayings is in reality denying the Qur'an, regardless of any claim they make.

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[138] 'Abdul Khāliq, *Ḥujjiyyat as-Sunnah,* p. 250.

Chapter Seven

Obstacles Faced by Those Who Reject Hadith

Since Hadith rejecters do not accept either the Hadith or the Sunnah, they face problems that are quite difficult and, sometimes, even impossible to deal with. One of these problems concerns how the prayer is to be performed and the details associated with it. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿ وَأَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُوا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ ... ﴿١١٠﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ١١٠)

﴿And establish the prayer and give the zakāh...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 110)*

The questions that Hadith rejecters must confront are many, such as: what kind of prayer is the Qur'an commanding? How is it performed? How many times is it supposed to be carried out and at what times? Who is obligated to perform the prayer and who is exempt from it? How many times is it to be performed in a lifetime? How many units (raka'āt) are to be performed: is it one, two or more? If it is one unit, how is it performed?

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱرۡكَعُواْ وَٱسۡجُدُواْ وَٱعۡبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمۡ وَٱفۡعَلُواْ ٱلۡخَيۡرَ
لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُونَ ۩ ٧٧ ﴾ (سورة الحج: الآية ٧٧)

Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿O you who believe, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord that you may attain success.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 77)*

This verse has specified that one must bow and prostrate. However, how do we bow and prostrate? Are these part of the prayer or something else? If they are part of the prayer, then are the number of bows and prostrations equal to one another, or is one performed more than the other? Allah (ﷻ) has also said in the Qur'an:

﴿ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتَهُۥ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى ٱلنَّبِيِّۚ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ صَلُّواْ عَلَيۡهِ
وَسَلِّمُواْ تَسۡلِيمًا ٥٦ ﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: الآية ٥٦)

﴿Allah and His angels send ṣalāh on the Prophet: O you who believe, send your ṣalāh on him, and salute him with all respect.﴾
(Qur'an 33: 56)

What does the word 'ṣalāh' in this verse mean? Is it the same as the prayer that Muslims are ordered to perform, or is it something different? How do Allah (ﷻ) and the angels send ṣalāh on the Prophet (ﷺ)?

One cannot answer any of the aforementioned questions by disregarding everything found in the Hadith or Sunnah regarding these verses. The problem becomes even more complex when the sayings of the scholars, along with the judgements and laws that they have extracted from the Sunnah, are disregarded too. Some questions may be answered; however, the rest of them cannot be given satisfactory replies based only on the Qur'an. If no one can answer these questions based on the Qur'an alone, can we really be held accountable for such actions without being given their details? Would Allah (ﷻ) order us to perform obligatory acts but not provide the details of how to perform them? This leads us to conclude that Allah (ﷻ) did not order us to decipher these general commands on our own. He knows that our minds are incapable of such a task. Thus, He sent to us the Messenger (ﷺ) as a teacher and interpreter of the Qur'an.

Regarding those who reject Hadith, Ibn Ḥazm asks the following questions:

> And we say to the one who makes this false claim: In which Qur'ān did he find the *ẓuhr* prayer to be four *rak'ah*, the *maghrib* three *rak'ah*, and that bowing is done in such a way, and prostration is done in such a way, and the manner of recitation in prayer and its conclusion, and the details of what to avoid while fasting. The details of *zakāh* concerning gold and silver; and the sheep, camel, and cows; and how much money one needs to have in order to be mandated to give *zakāh*; and the percentage of *zakāh* to be taken; the details of the rituals of *ḥajj* and the time one should go to the mountain of 'Arafāt, how to pray while at 'Arafāt and Muzdalifa; and the throwing of the stones; how to wear the *iḥrām* and what to avoid while wearing it; and the cutting the hand of the thief, the details of the prohibition through suckling, and what kind of foods are prohibited, and the details of slaughtering, the rules of *ḥudūd* and the taking place of divorce, the rules of transactions, what constitutes interest; judicial decisions, legal pleadings, oaths, interdictions, wills, charity, and the rest of issues in jurisprudence? Surely, in the Qur'ān are general commands if we were left with only them we would not know how to apply them. Instead, we must always return in all of these issues to what has been narrated from the Prophet peace be upon him… And if someone says: "We only follow what we find in the Qur'ān" he would be a disbeliever by consensus of the *ummah* and he would only have to pray one *rak'ah* between the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night

> and another at dawn, because that is the minimum of what is called *ṣalāh*…[139]

Since these and many other questions cannot be answered using the Qur'an alone, it explains why Hadith rejecters have so many differences of opinion among themselves as to how the prayer is to be performed. Let us now look at the manner in which the Quranists and other Hadith rejecters pray, and attempt to interpret prayer using only the Qur'an.

Both history and the consensus of the Muslims have proved that there are five daily prayers. Some of the Quranists do not make the call to prayer. They recite 'God is great' silently, kneel on one knee in prayer and open their own mosques; they do not perform Eid or funeral prayers, and they refuse to pray with other Muslims.[140]

Chakralawi attempted to prove that the Qur'an contains all the details of the ṣalāh. He went to extremes in his interpretation in order to do this. Mistrī Muhammad Ramaḍān, one of Chakralawi's students, disagreed with him with regard to the number of prayers. Ramaḍān accused his teacher of adhering to Hadith. Although Chakralawi did his best to demonstrate that five prayers are enjoined in the Qur'an, his student disagreed with him and said that the Qur'an has mentioned only three prayers. He also reduced the number of units for each prayer to two, removed much of the recitation and did not make the call to prayer.[141]

The different opinions of the Quranists and other Hadith rejecters concerning ṣalāh, zakāh and other acts of worship are too many to enumerate. Each group prays differently and has a different interpretation of ṣalāh. Each group's prayer is different and in contradiction to how the entire Muslim nation has been praying for the past 1400 years. I will now mention the position of Abdullah Chakralawi and his followers with regard to the prayer in some detail and also briefly mention how a few other Hadith rejecters pray.

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[139] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām,* pp. 252-253.

[140] Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought,* p. 39.

[141] Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought,* pp. 45-46.

The first few obstacles that Abdullah Chakralawi faced after rejecting Hadith included the following questions: How does one pray? Where are the details of the prayer, its numbers, positions, and what to say throughout it, found in the Qur'an? After attempting to find the details of prayer in the Qur'an, Chakralawi concluded that there are five prayers by using the following verse:

﴿ وَأَقِمِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ طَرَفَيِ ٱلنَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ ٱلَّيۡلِ ... ١١٤ ﴾ (سورة هود: الآية ١١٤)

﴾And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night...﴿ *(Qur'an 11: 114)*

He includes the morning, afternoon and late afternoon prayers under the description of the ﴾two ends of the day﴿, while placing the sunset and night prayers under the prayer which is to be performed in the ﴾approaches of the night﴿.[142]

Why did Abdullah limit the prayers to five? Nothing in this verse indicates five prayers. The most that one can possibly conclude from this verse are three prayers, and as has been pointed out, even his students disagreed with him on this. This indicates that Chakralawi knew there was no way to extract five prayers from the Qur'an alone. Moreover, since Muslims have been praying five times a day since the era of the Prophet (ﷺ), it is overwhelmingly obvious that it is the correct number of prayers due per day.

Chakralawi also attempts to dig out the number of units per prayer from the following verse:

﴿ ٱلۡحَمۡدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ جَاعِلِ ٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُوْلِيٓ أَجۡنِحَةٖ مَّثۡنَىٰ وَثُلَٰثَ وَرُبَٰعَۚ يَزِيدُ فِي ٱلۡخَلۡقِ مَا يَشَآءُۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٞ ١ ﴾

(سورة فاطر: الآية ١)

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[142] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, p. 367.

﴾Praise be to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels, messengers with wings – two, or three, or four [pairs]. He adds to creation as He pleases, for Allah has power over all things.﴿ *(Qur'an 35: 1)*

He said that Muslims should recite *Alḥamdulillāh* (All praise be to Allah) in their five daily prayers and that each unit of prayer should be repeated two, three or four times.[143] It is clear that this verse has nothing to do with the number of units per prayer. How he extracted the number of units per prayer from the number of wings of angels is beyond comprehension.

Additionally, he argued that one should not make the call to prayer, because the Qur'an did not order it. In other words, once the time for the prayer has started, one should just proceed to pray without any announcement. According to his (mis)understanding, one should begin the prayer by facing the qiblah, and by holding one's ears each time one moves from one posture in the prayer to another, because this is a way of acknowledging one's sins. Yet, he has given no reference from the Qur'an to show how he came to this understanding. Furthermore, he has stated that one should put one's right hand over the left; he used the following verse as evidence:

﴿ ٱسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوٓءٍ وَٱضْمُمْ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ
مِنَ ٱلرَّهْبِ ۖ فَذَٰنِكَ بُرْهَـٰنَانِ مِن رَّبِّكَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَإِي۟هِۦٓ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوا۟ قَوْمًا فَـٰسِقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ ﴾ (سورة قصص: الآية٣٢)

﴾Enter your hand into the opening of your bosom; it will come forth white without evil, and draw your hand to yourself to ward off fear, so these two shall be two signs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs. Surely they are a transgressing people.﴿ *(Qur'an 28: 32)*

This verse refers to Moses (ﷺ) going to the people of the Pharaoh with signs, one of which is that his hand will become white after drawing it close to his chest. It has nothing to do with prayer or the position of prayer, however, Chakralawi was in desperate need of evidence from the Qur'an; since he could not find it, he resorted to frantically choosing verses and distorting their meanings out of context. Although he claims to be a follower of the Qur'an, he is obviously abusing it, misinterpreting it and twisting its meanings to suit his agenda.

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[143] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, pp. 367-368.

Chakralawi did not consider prayer in any one part of the earth better than in any other part. To him, praying in Makkah, Madinah or Jerusalem is no more rewarding than praying in Las Vegas. He does not begin the prayer by saying: *Allāhu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest) and reciting sūrat *al-Fātiḥah* like all the other Muslims. Rather, he begins by reciting the following verse:

﴿ ... وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْعَلِىُّ ٱلْكَبِيرُ ﴿٦٢﴾ ﴾ (سورة الحج: الآية ٦٢)

﴿…And Allah, He is the High, the Great.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 62)*

He ends the prayer by reciting the following verse:

﴿ وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَـٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ
نَفْسِهِ ٱلرَّحْمَةَ ؕ أَنَّهُۥ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنكُمْ سُوٓءًۢا بِجَهَـٰلَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ وَأَصْلَحَ
فَأَنَّهُۥ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة أنعام: الآية ٥٤)

﴿And when those who believe in Our signs come to you, say: Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself [so] that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 54)*

He also deems it prohibited to recite anything but the Qur'an throughout the prayer.[144] These conclusions have no evidence based on the Qur'an; they are only his personal opinions, and that is why we see that his own disciples and students disagreed with him.

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[144] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, pp. 368-369.

It is quite evident that Chakralawi went to extremes in interpreting verses in order to find the details of prayer in the Qur'an. The verses have been taken out of context, twisted, and grossly misinterpreted in a feeble attempt to extract the details of prayer from the Qur'an. The method Chakralawi used is not that of a true researcher and seeker of the truth; instead, it is a method which has distorted the true meaning of the texts. No sensible person will ever accept this method of arguing. Muftī Muhammad Taqī Usmanī says:

> The duty of a research worker is not to collect arguments for a predetermined idea but to determine an idea in the light of arguments. He does not drag the arguments towards his judgment but the arguments drive him towards a judgment. But the process of working of our modernists is quite opposite. They believe that arguments are to serve a decision rather than a decision being dependent on arguments.[145]

As mentioned earlier, a student of Chakralawi, Muḥammad Ramaḍān, disagreed with him and even accused him of following the Hadith. Ramaḍān laid down the rules for prayer, and this is how the majority of followers of Chakralawi practice today, perhaps not even realising that they are following Ramaḍān's rulings instead of Chakralawi's. Muḥammad Ramaḍān wrote a book about how one should pray, which is based only on misinterpreted verses from the Qur'an. Today, the Quranists follow this, even though the leaders of *Balāgh al-Qur'ān* later changed the title of his book and removed his name as the author. Unlike Chakralawi, they only pray three times a day – the sunrise, afternoon, and evening prayers. Every prayer consists of only two units. They begin their prayer by reciting part of a verse from the Qur'an:

﴿ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ ... هُوَ ٱلۡعَلِيُّ ٱلۡكَبِيرُ ٦٢﴾ (سورة الحج: الآية ٦٢)

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[145] Usmani, *The Authority of the Sunnah*, p. 41.

﴿…and because Allah, He is the High, the Great.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 62)*

Their imam stands among the followers and not in front of them, as is the norm in conventional Muslim prayer gatherings; then they recite twenty-five different verses from the Qur'an, excluding al-Fātiḥah, according to the method instructed by Muḥammad Ramaḍān. They do not rise up after bowing; instead, they fall into prostration directly, and every unit only contains one prostration, not two. After remembering God in their prostration, their prayer ends simply without any formal manner such as saying *as-salāmu 'alaykum wa raḥmat Allāh* (Peace be upon you, and the mercy of Allah) or any other major act to signify the end.[146] Even if we accept this way of prayer, it still has no evidence from the Qur'an. Where in the Qur'an does it state where the imam stands? Where does the Qur'an mention the number of prostrations or what is recited during prayer?

More modern rejecters of Hadith, such as Rashad Khalifa and Ahmad Kassim, hold that the ṣalāh was not learned from Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) but that its details have been inherited from Prophet Abraham (عليه السلام) and passed down through the generations.[147] It is mind-boggling how they refuse to follow the rituals of prayer which have been authenticated through various chains of narration as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), yet they follow the rituals of Abraham (عليه السلام), for which there is absolutely no evidence. In other words, they follow the Hadith of Abraham (عليه السلام) instead of the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ); do they have an issue with Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)? Perhaps the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) go against Khalifa's claim to be a messenger of Allah (ﷻ), therefore he rejects them and claims that all rituals were authentically passed down to us from Prophet Abraham (عليه السلام), not Muhammad (ﷺ). Even if this were true, it would nullify their claim that the Qur'an contains all the details, because they are learning from the teachings of Prophet Abraham (ﷺ). It is also quite clear that such statements stem from arrogance and refusal to accept the truth.

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[146] Bakhsh, *Al-Qur'ānīyūn wa Shubahātuhum*, pp. 371-372.

[147] Musa, Aisha Yusuf. "A Study of Early and Contemporary Muslim Attitudes toward *Hadith* as Scripture with a Translation of al-Shāfi'i's *Kitāb Jima al-Ilm*." PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004, p. 144.

Edip Yuksel, a friend and colleague of Rashad Khalifa, holds that there are only three prayers instead of five, since the Qur'an only mentions three by name. Yuksel does find the postures of prayer in the Qur'an, but not the number of units; thus, he concludes that they are left to our discretion.[148] The rejecters of Hadith are clearly unsure about prayer – how it is performed and its rules and regulations, so each one improvises according to whims. Imam Shāfi'i's fear was that if Hadiths were disregarded, people would interpret the Qur'an freely and according to their personal desires. This fear is manifested in the way the rejecters of Hadith interpret ṣalāh. Without the guidance of Hadith, people will do anything they desire with regard to any matter that has not been clearly specified in the Qur'an. Apparently, after all these years, Hadith rejecters have been unsuccessful in inventing a new form of ṣalāh that they can all agree upon, in terms of the number of units and the times of each prayer. Every group of Hadith rejecters has introduced its own innovations for prayer, while accusing the others of being wrong.

Since the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), Muslims have been praying in a certain manner five times daily and making the call to prayer, as well as attending Eid and funeral prayers. Does this mean that since the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), Muslims have been praying incorrectly and Hadith rejecters have come to correct the entire Muslim nation and its scholarly heritage 1400 years later? This is very unlikely, as Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ ٱلرَّسُولَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ ٱلۡهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعۡ غَيۡرَ سَبِيلِ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ
نُوَلِّهِۦ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصۡلِهِۦ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَآءَتۡ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ١١٥)

﴿And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him, and follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to that to which he has turned and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort.﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 115)*

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[148] Musa, "Early and Contemporary Muslim Attitudes toward Hadith", p. 145.

This verse makes it evident that anyone who follows a way other than that of the believers will be punished. Since the era of the Prophet (ﷺ), there has been and continues to be a consensus among the believers about the call to prayer, as well as the numbers of prayers and the way they are to be performed. Today, Hadith rejecters are leaving the way that the believers have been following since that time and are innovating rituals that have never been practiced before, not even by the earlier sects who rejected Hadith. If one assumes that Hadith rejecters are correct, that means that no believer has understood Islam for the past 1,400 years. All the verses that the deniers of Hadith use in order to pray are ambiguous; this is obvious, given all of the different interpretations of prayer by the Hadith rejecters.

Allah (ﷻ) has mentioned some minute details in the Qur'an; stories such as that of Sulaymān (عليه السلام) and the ant, the Prophet (ﷺ) frowning at a blind man, and the food of the dwellers of hell and heaven. Therefore, one must ask, why did Allah (ﷻ) not mention something as great as ṣalāh in a clearer and more detailed manner? In spite of this, those who follow the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) all pray the exact same number of times and do not differ concerning how it is to be performed. Ultimately, Hadith rejecters are left puzzled and struggling to find clear evidence in the Qur'an on how to pray. Therefore, they all have different interpretations and pray differently.

Another obstacle that Hadith rejecters face is regarding the issue of zakāh – without Hadith, one would not know how much zakāh to give, or even who is required to give it. Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:

﴾ ... وَٱلَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ ٱلذَّهَبَ وَٱلْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنفِقُونَهَا فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُم
بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۝٣٤ ﴿ (سورة توبة: الآية ٣٤)

﴾…Those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the news of a painful punishment.﴿ *(Qur'an 9: 34)*

In this verse, we see that the accumulation of wealth is forbidden, while spending is commanded. However, the amount has not been explained for either. Ṣalāh and zakāh are just two examples of obstacles faced by the Hadith rejecters; they have no way of explaining this from the Qur'an itself. This is yet another clear indication that hadiths are needed in order to apply the injunctions of the Qur'an. One also wonders how they differentiate between what is general and specific, and what is recommended, mandatory, disliked, and completely prohibited. One cannot possibly discover such details without the Sunnah.

Another example of obstacles Hadith rejecters face is how to interpret certain verses in the Qur'an. The following are some of the verses from the Qur'an speaking about intoxicants:

﴿ يَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلْخَمْرِ وَٱلْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَآ إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَـٰفِعُ لِلنَّاسِ
وَإِثْمُهُمَآ أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا ۗ وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ قُلِ ٱلْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ
يُبَيِّنُ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمُ ٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١٩﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ٢١٩)

﴾They ask you about intoxicants and gambling. Say: in both of them there is a great sin and a means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make clear to you the verses, so that you may think.﴿ *(Qur'an 2: 219)*

﴿ يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِنَّمَا ٱلْخَمْرُ وَٱلْمَيْسِرُ وَٱلْأَنصَابُ وَٱلْأَزْلَـٰمُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ
عَمَلِ ٱلشَّيْطَـٰنِ فَٱجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱلشَّيْطَـٰنُ أَن يُوقِعَ
بَيْنَكُمُ ٱلْعَدَٰوَةَ وَٱلْبَغْضَآءَ فِى ٱلْخَمْرِ وَٱلْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ وَعَنِ
ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّنتَهُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ ﴾ (سورة المائدة: الآية ٩٠ — ٩١)

﴾O you who believe, intoxicants, gambling, idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Shun them in order that you may succeed. Satan's plan is to excite enmity and hatred among you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer: will you not then abstain?﴿

(Qur'an 5: 90-91)

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَقْرَبُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَٰرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُواْ مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِى سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُواْ ۚ وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰٓ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ ٱلْغَآئِطِ أَوْ لَٰمَسْتُمُ ٱلنِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُواْ مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُواْ صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَٱمْسَحُواْ بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا ٤٣ ﴾

(سورة النساء: الآية ٤٣)

﴾O you who believe, do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying, nor when you are under an obligation to perform a bath, unless travelling on the road, until you have washed yourselves; and if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you comes from answering the call of nature, or you have touched women, and you cannot find water, then take yourselves to pure earth, then wipe your faces and your hands; surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 43)*

﴿ وَمِن ثَمَرَٰتِ ٱلنَّخِيلِ وَٱلْأَعْنَٰبِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۗ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَأَيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ٦٧ ﴾ (سورة نحل: الآية ٦٧)

﴾And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes – you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who ponder.﴿ *(Qur'an 16: 67)*

The first set of verses declares that even though intoxicants provide some benefit, their harm is greater. The second set commands Muslims not to go near it at all, while the third verse directs the

Muslims not to go near prayer when intoxicated. The fourth verse, however, states that intoxicants are a goodly provision. How does one know the order in which these verses were revealed? This is uncertain from the Qur'an itself. Were intoxicants prohibited at first and then gradually allowed except when one was praying, or were they allowed at first and then gradually prohibited?

Allah has also said in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَٱلسَّارِقُ وَٱلسَّارِقَةُ فَٱقْطَعُوٓا۟ أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَٰلًا مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة المائدة: الآية ٣٨)

{And the thief, both male and female, cut off their hands. It is the compensation for their deeds, an exemplary punishment from Allah. Allah is Mighty and Wise.} *(Qur'an 5: 38)*

The command in this verse is that the hand of the thief, male or female, is to be cut off; but what defines a thief? Is it the linguistic meaning? If so, what are its conditions? How much does one have to steal in order for this punishment to apply? Do those who steal to feed their starving families get their hands cut off? Moreover, the Arabic term *yad* is ambiguous and can refer to any part of the hand, from the tip of the finger to the shoulder. The Qur'an commands that the hand be cut off, but from where: the fingers, wrist, elbow, or shoulder? If someone steals more than twice and has had both hands previously cut off, then what is to be done to that person? It is impossible to answer these questions solely from the Qur'an.

The fact that the meaning and implication of all these verses is unclear is evidence that the Qur'an has invited us to refer to the life and times of the Prophet (ﷺ), which is best described in the recordings of Hadith. Many of the meanings of the verses in the Qur'an – and how they are to be applied – are unclear without the explanation of the Prophet (ﷺ). This alone should suffice as evidence that the Sunnah is authoritative. In other words, understanding and implementing the Qur'an necessitates that the Sunnah be referred to.

It has been established that Hadith rejecters cannot even agree on the interpretation of the basics of prayer, because their interpretations are based on personal opinions, leaving the interpretation of the Prophet (ﷺ) aside. Any interpretation of the Qur'an must be built upon the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ); otherwise, everyone and anyone will interpret the Qur'an to mean anything he or she wants. The Qur'an is a book of guidance which appeals to the human sense of reason and logic. It is illogical to think that Allah (ﷻ) would put so much emphasis on the importance of the prayer and yet not give us the details of how to perform it. If Hadith rejecters claim that the details are found in the Qur'an, then we must ask why each group of Hadith rejecters has a different interpretation concerning it. It is true that Muslim jurists do differ on the interpretation of certain verses, but not on the basics of something as fundamental as ṣalāh. The Qur'an itself gives us the big picture and indicates that the specifics about the practical application of these commands is found in the Sunnah.

When faced with this overwhelming evidence, some resort to another way of casting doubt on the credibility of Hadith. According to them, the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) is binding on all people in all times, but it has not been preserved as the Qur'an has been preserved. They claim that, unlike the Qur'an, there is not a single book of Hadith that is reliable; there are too many works of Hadith which often contradict each other. They were compiled in the third century AH,[149] and we cannot place our trust in reports which were not written until three centuries after the Prophet's death.[150]

This argument states that Muslims in all times are commanded to follow the Prophet (ﷺ), but that the reports about the Prophet (ﷺ) are unreliable. This is alleging that Allah (ﷻ) made it mandatory for the Muslims to obey the Messenger (ﷺ), but made this impossible to do so. It cannot be imagined that Allah (ﷻ) compelled the Muslims to follow something which does not exist. Although a detailed study of the preservation of Hadith is beyond the scope of this work, let us look at the following verse from the Qur'an:

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[149] This claim has been discussed earlier in the book. Refer to Chapter 5, the fourth argument of the Hadith rejecters.

[150] Usmani, *The Authority of the Sunnah*, p. 75.

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ ٩ ﴾ (سورة حجر: الآية ٩)

﴿Surely We have revealed the reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.﴾ *(Qur'an 15: 9)*

Ibn Ḥazm has stated that all of the Prophet's speech regarding religion is revelation; there is no difference between linguists and jurists in their deduction that all revelation sent down by Allah (ﷻ) is dhikr. If one argues that the word 'dhikr' in this verse means only the Qur'an, such a person is limiting and specifying the meaning of dhikr without any evidence or reason. The Qur'an also has many general commands pertaining to ṣalāh, zakāh and Hajj. If the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding these issues have not been protected, one no longer benefits from much of the text of the Qur'an.[151]

The protection is not limited to the words of the Qur'an; it extends to its real meaning as well. If the Prophet's explanation is needed in order to understand the Qur'an, as has been established above, then it is necessary that it be preserved as well, along with the words of the Qur'an. As quoted earlier:

﴿ ... وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ
٤٤ ﴾ (سورة نحل: الآية ٤٤)

﴿And We sent down to you the reminder so that you may explain to people what was revealed to them and so they may reflect.﴾
(Qur'an 16: 44)

The word dhikr has been used in both of the aforementioned verses, and it is clear that people can only benefit from the dhikr when it is combined with the explanation of the Prophet (ﷺ). Since the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent to explain the Qur'an to 'people', it means his explanation is needed by everyone, for without it, one cannot get the full benefit of the Qur'an. It would be useless to preserve the words of the Qur'an and not the Prophet's explanation of them. To do so would leave the Qur'an at the mercy of distorters, without any protection whatsoever.[152]

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[151] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, pp. 135-136.

If the word 'explain' in *(Qur'an 16: 44)* above means to deliver the Qur'an, then the verse would be saying: "We sent down to you the Qur'an so that you may explain to people the Qur'an." Had that been the meaning of the verse, it would have sufficed for the verse to say: "We sent down to you the Qur'an so that you may explain it to people."

The Prophet (ﷺ) was well aware that Allah (ﷻ) had revealed the Qur'an so that he would deliver its message to the people; that is common sense. However, when examined more carefully, the verse has also mentioned the revelation of two distinct things: 1) the dhikr that was revealed only to the Prophet (ﷺ) in order to guide him in explaining the revelation of the Qur'an; and 2) that which had already been revealed to the people. The former was revealed to explain the latter. The first is the Sunnah, and the second is the Qur'an. The verse means: "And we sent down to you the reminder [Sunnah] so that you may explain to people what was revealed to them [the Qur'an] and so they may reflect".[153] Let us assume that the reminder means only the Qur'an; then without the Sunnah, the meaning and explanation of the Qur'an would be lost, thus the Qur'an would not be preserved. No matter from which angle one looks at this verse, one must conclude that Allah (ﷻ) is making either a direct or indirect promise to preserve the Sunnah.

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[152] Usmani, *The Authority of the Sunnah*, pp. 76-77.

[153] Ṭaha, *Rad Shubuh al-Munkirīn*, p. 31.

Chapter Eight

The Sceptical Approach: A Response to Jeffrey Lang

In this chapter, we will discuss the sceptical approach taken by an increasing number of Muslims, especially in the West. This attitude usually consists of rejecting or doubting the authenticity of Hadith, based exclusively on a superficial study of the text and complete disregard for other aspects relating to the Hadith – such as its isnād, the context in which it was said, the nature of the Arabic language and the interpretation of the Hadith scholars. It is vital that one who addresses an issue has extensive knowledge of the topic, especially when reaching a conclusion that contradicts the opinion of an overwhelming majority of scholars in that field. A problem that the Muslim world faces today is that anyone can speak about Islam and be taken seriously, despite a lack of scholarship. In adhering to this approach, one can easily misconstrue the meaning of a text and misinform others, although the individual might have good intentions.

Among those who appear to have taken this sceptical approach toward Hadith is Jeffrey Lang. Lang wrote numerous books that are very helpful to both non-Muslims and new Muslims, and his works have been translated into other languages. His latest book, *Losing My Religion: A Call for Help,* is an attempt to come up with answers to his personal doubts, which are shared by a number of newly-practicing Muslims in the West. In this book, Lang has expressed doubt regarding the methodology of reputed Hadith scholars.

It is normal for a person to have doubts, especially for Muslims living in the West, where Orientalist works are available in English, but good books defending the classical approach of Islam are not always easily available. There is a difference, however, between having private doubts and writing about them in published works. Lang's book seeks to help those who are calling out for help in a weak spiritual state. Sharing his doubts and conclusions based on partial research is unfair to his readers, who may look up to him as an authority on the topics discussed. If one were to read medical books and become confused about the different opinions featured therein, one is not entitled to write a book criticising the study of medicine, giving his or her own opinion about which medications people should accept or reject. The sciences of Islam are similar, yet more important, because creed determines one's eternal destination. Therefore, Lang is to be applauded for his attempt to help those struggling in their religion, but he is to be criticised for propagating his doubts and trying to back them up with scholarly proofs.

Lang's method has been scrutinised in the following pages and shown to be more unreliable and less structured as compared to the methodology of traditional Hadith scholars. We will look into certain hadiths that Lang either rejects or doubts. Through these, we will demonstrate that he has arrived at the wrong conclusions because of his incorrect approach. This is, in no way, a personal attack against him; rather, his views have been analysed and refuted because all of those who take this approach carry a similar outlook.

Lang is a professor of Mathematics and is not fluent in Arabic. He himself states, "I have not had the time, nor have I acquired the fluency in Arabic needed to study much of the key source material in its original language."[154]

Since he was unable to access all the sources, he should have refrained from publicising his unscholarly opinions about Hadith which, in turn, can engender doubt among new Muslims or those with limited knowledge. Keeping in mind the fact that his book is directed towards those who are in a vulnerable spiritual state, it is neither wise nor fair to provide them with unscholarly information that may only increase their doubt.

While writing about Hadith, his lack of fluency in Arabic has limited the realm of sources available to him for referral; he quotes extensively from the writings of G.H.A. Juynboll, an Orientalist seeking to advance the theories of Schacht.[155] Since Lang used inaccurate sources, he has consequently arrived at the wrong conclusions. I do not mean to say that Lang accepts everything Juynboll says; however, the writings of Juynboll and other Orientalists have clearly influenced his conclusions. Furthermore, Lang's methodology of criticising certain hadiths is not very different from Schacht, the man whose theory Juynboll attempts to advance.

In addition, Lang's conclusions are not very different from those of the controversial Abū Rayya, the Egyptian author who tried to prove that the Sunnah as a whole had been fabricated.[156]

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[154] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 170.

[155] G.H.A Juynboll has been criticised for many blatant mistakes in his works. For more details see Zarabozo, M. Jamaal ad-Din. *Towards Understanding our Religion Volume 1.* Denver, USA: Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 1999, pp. 145-149. Several Western scholars have also criticised Juynboll's methodology; see Motzki, Harald. "Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey". *Arabica* 52, no. 2 (2005), pp. 204-253. Also see Brown, Jonathan A. C. "Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadith* By GHA Juynboll." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 3 (2008), pp. 391-397. Also see Siddiqui, Muhammad Zubayr. *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, and Special Features.* Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993, pp. 133-134.

[156] Abū Rayya's arguments against the Sunnah have been refuted at length by many scholars. See, for example, as-Sibā'ī's work.

This led Abū Rayya to question the authenticity and reliability of Abū Hurayrah (﵁), and Lang treads a similar path. Abū Rayya was basically repeating the conclusions reached by the Orientalists, making them appear as his own. The arguments and conclusions of both Lang and Abū Rayya are clearly influenced by the Orientalists and, at times, are nothing more than word for word repetitions of them, although Lang may not have been as conscious of this compared to Abū Rayya.

Works about Islam that are authored by non-Muslims should be read with extreme caution, especially those whose authors are known to have hidden agendas concealed behind a meagre facade of sincerity, as well as those who have a xenophobic attitude toward Islam and Muslims. In his brilliantly written book *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation,* M. al-Azami has stated that those writing about Islam must first decide whether or not they believe in Muhammad (ﷺ) as a prophet. Those who refuse to acknowledge him as such must, by extension, perceive him as a deluded madman or a liar, bearing false claims of prophethood. This is the adopted stance of all non-Muslim scholars, through which their endeavours are filtered: if they do not set out to prove Muhammad's untruthfulness or the Qur'an's fallacy, what would hinder them from accepting Islam?[157]

Ibn Sīrīn[158] (d. 110 AH/ 728 CE) also stated that knowledge of religion constitutes faith, and therefore, one should be wary of whom they acquire their knowledge from.[159]

After discussing the debate surrounding the authenticity and preservation of Hadith in some detail, Lang concludes:

> As for now, given the ambiguousness of the evidence considered thus far, my faith in traditional *hadith* classification necessarily

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[157] Al-Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, p. 341.

[158] Ibn Sīrīn, Abū Bakr Muhammad was the first renowned Muslim interpreter of dreams. He was also very well-versed in Hadith and jurisprudence, and known for his piety. See T. Fahd, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Sirīn.*

[159] Al-Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, p. 341.

> rests on *my study of the texts (matns) of the traditions*. I have devoted most of my attention to the *Sahihs* of al Bukhari (which I have read twice from cover to cover) and Muslim bin al Hajjaj (which I have read once from start to finish), and have studied portions of the remaining Six Books and Imam Malik's *Muwatta* (which I have read several times). Though many of the authenticated reports seem credible, there are some of which I could not help being suspicious.[160] [Emphasis mine]

This approach of Lang's is indisputably unscholarly; in fact, it is based on personal reason. To whose 'reason' does Lang desire to give more authority than the reason of the Hadith experts? Is this methodology of resting one's faith in traditional Hadith classification on the study of the matn open to everyone?[161] Everyone's reason is different – what might not make sense to one person may make complete sense to another; one person may easily comprehend what another might be unable to understand. One cannot depend on the reason of a certain individual; instead, it is the collective reason of the Hadith scholars that is authoritative.

Lang has opened the door to criticising the matn using only personal reason without any scholarly basis. What some refer to as reason is, in reality, nothing but their desires and intellectual inclinations. In most cases, those who criticise only the matn do so without looking into the context of the hadith, or without studying all the scholarly opinions concerning it. They judge it without taking all the factors into consideration. Opening the door to this kind of Hadith criticism can lead to never-ending disarray and chaos, for people will start rejecting what should not be rejected and labelling authentic texts as fabricated.

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[160] Lang, *Losing My Religion,* p. 248.

[161] The Qur'an promotes isnād criticism: ❮Oh you who believe, if an evildoer comes to you with a report, verify it, lest you harm some people in ignorance, then feel sorry for what you have done.❯ *(Qur'an 49: 6)*
This does not mean that if the person is honest, one is not required to verify it; however, if the transmitter is an evildoer, then one must verify it.

Although the methodology of Hadith scholars is based on probabilities, it is nevertheless a scientific method. On the other hand, Lang's methodology of Hadith criticism is exclusively based on individual reasoning that will lead to haphazardness in eventually accepting or rejecting a hadith. The superb scholars of Hadith, the experts in their fields, all identified isnād as a reliable way to measure the authenticity of a hadith. Instead of declaring the isnād system as unreliable and standing in opposition to the Hadith experts – on account of his own perception and interpretation – Lang should have questioned his own perception in regards to the reliability of the isnād system, before implying that the methodology of Hadith scholars is incorrect, especially considering that he is not an expert in the field and does not have a fraction of the knowledge they possessed.

Bearing in mind the fact that Lang does not know the Arabic language, and is a mathematician rather than an expert in Hadith or other Islamic sciences, he is not qualified to judge the authenticity of any hadith or to even criticise the methodology of Hadith scholars. We respect the concept that one must study for many years to become a medical doctor before writing prescriptions; so why is it that when it comes to Islam, everyone is an expert and has the right to say whatever he or she wishes? The books of Bukhari and Muslim were never meant for the layperson.

In his article titled *Al-Bukhārī al-Maẓlūm* (Bukharī the Wronged), Qutaiba Albluwi points out that many people are ignorant of the status of Bukhari and his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Ignorance consequently leads to doubt and scepticism, which in turn leads to blindness. When confronted with the 'uncomfortable' statements of the Prophet (ﷺ), some may wish to bury their heads in the sand. Not being familiar with the status of Bukharī as a scholar, and his *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a scholarly text, will ultimately lead to the rejection of these hadiths. Laypersons may argue that there must be weak hadiths in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* since Bukhari is a human and not exempt from making mistakes.[162] Albluwi points out that today, Bukhari and Muslim (as well as many other scholars) are wronged by some ignorant people who approach their works literally, without any prior training. There is also the misconception that everything in Bukhari and Muslim must be applied according to its literal meaning. He goes on to argue that in many cases, a hadith might say one thing at a literal level, but the jurist will come to a ruling that says the complete opposite.[163] The one who thinks that these great jurists would hear the Prophet's saying and then throw them out of the door is truly unfortunate. Indeed, they knew, understood, and explained these hadiths; they specified why they did not apply their literal meaning. Bukhari never imagined that laypeople would use his book to come to conclusions concerning the religion, as though his work was the ultimate criterion. Imam Mālik feared this for his own book, which is why he refused the request of the caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr (d. 158 AH/ 775 CE) to make Mālik's book the official law of the state.

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[162] The issue of whether *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* contains weak hadiths is beyond the scope of this work. However, Hadith scholars have dealt with this in extensive detail. In his *Ilzāmāt wat-Tattabu'*, Hadith master 'Alī ibn 'Umar ad-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385 AH/ 995 CE), who was known for his stringent methodology in Hadith criticism, criticised a number of hadiths in Bukhari's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. He criticised them because he believed they were objectively flawed and did not meet the conditions of Bukhari. However, scholars such as Ibn Ḥajar have refuted ad-Dāraquṭnī. Contrary to what many may think, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is perhaps the most studied book among Hadith scholars, which means it went through the most scrutiny throughout the centuries, until most Sunni scholars came to a consensus that all the hadiths in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* are authentic. For more information on Dāraquṭni's criticism of Bukhari, see: Brown, Jonathan A.C. "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon: Al-Dāraquṭni's Adjustment of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2004).

[163] The learned author gives two such examples from each of the four legal schools. See the author's article.

Albluwi rightly states that the Hadith compilations were meant to serve fiqh, and fiqh explains the Sunnah. Once this is understood, it solves many problems concerning these works of Hadith. One who approaches these works without prior training is like one fishing in murky water. These books were never intended to be used as such, nor for laypeople to read and reject. When the tools needed to approach these works of Hadith are disregarded, it leads to a generation that is lost and sceptical about how fiqh works and how to understand Hadith. Consequently, this leads to scepticism concerning the authenticity of Hadith found in these works and subsequently, chaos and confusion. This is bound to happen because those who do not have the tools will certainly become lost and confused. What is most unfortunate is the refusal of such people to recognise their own misunderstandings and lack of training, and their accusing these great scholars of ignorance and naivety. Albluwi makes an excellent point by arguing that before they even begin to doubt the hadiths in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* they should first learn the full name of the author, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Bardizba al-Bukhārī, and pronounce it correctly.[164] This does not mean that laypeople should not read Hadith; however, credible scholars should be consulted before coming to any conclusion, especially on matters of law and creed, because these texts are meant to be approached with a specific methodology.

Moreover, it must be understood that many of the Hadith compilations were meant to serve jurists in their endeavour to arrive at rulings. Hence, these works are divided into chapters according to matters of jurisprudence such as prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. They were never intended for the layperson to find quick rulings or conclusions on matters of law and creed.

In the introduction of his translation of Imam Bukhari's *Book of Muslim Morals and Manners*, Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo has stated that very few people are equipped to deal with Bukhari's works, including his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

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[164] Albluwi, Qutaiba, *Al-Bukhārī al-Maẓıūm*. Available at: http://www.alfagih.net/site/?p=5366#more-5366. Last accessed: Sept 28, 2010.

In the traditional system of Islamic education, for example, the study of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* came only after a student had spent years learning the classical disciplines such as Arabic, rhetoric and literature, the rational sciences of logic, Islamic legal theory, the many Qur'anic sciences from *tajwīd* (rules of Qur'an recitation) to *tafsīr* (explanation of the meanings of the Qur'an) and the study of the principles of Hadith. Only students who demonstrated their mastery of these subjects were allowed to attend the lessons, which were usually given by the most learned and respected of all teachers, on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.[165]

DeLorenzo goes on to state that in the traditional scheme, there were many reasons for this postponement. The status accorded to Bukhari's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was so elevated that only those who had mastered the classical disciplines were considered to be sufficiently prepared to take on its study. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* is so full of technical nuances, related to the science of Hadith and the study of those who transmitted hadiths, that a thorough understanding of those subjects is required if these are to be appreciated entirely. Similarly, unless the students had mastered the other classical disciplines, they would overlook many details and meanings.

This being the case, it is not surprising that traditional scholars were so against the notion of translating *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The majority of traditional scholars had no difficulty in accepting the translation of the Qur'an into other languages, but not *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* or any other Hadith works. The Qur'an is a book of revelation that is clear and full of guidance, and no one who reads it with an open mind will go astray. Hadith literature, however, is a very different story. Yusuf DeLorenzo states:

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[165] al-Bukhārī, Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl. *Imam Bukhari's Book of Muslim Morals and Manners.* Edited by Yusuf T. DeLorenzo. Alexandria, Virginia: Al-Saadawi Publications, 1997, vols I-III.

> The word I recall the shaykh using to describe what results when the unprepared non-scholar attempts to read the hadith literature was *fitnah*, or a trial, in the sense that the person would be so confused and overcome after undertaking such an uninformed and one-dimensional reading of that literature (ī.e., in translation without the presence of a shaykh to guide him/her through the obstacles) that he or she would face a crisis in their religion, a trial of spiritual proportions.[166]

Therefore, despite the number of times Lang and anyone else reads the Hadith books, they are not qualified to judge either them or their authenticity unless they first go through years of scholarly training. Doubting the authenticity of Hadith as a whole can lead to chaos and the eventual rejection of both the Qur'an and Sunnah. The people who passed down Hadith to us are the same people who passed down the Qur'an. If we declare them as unreliable when it comes to Hadith, then eventually people will also declare the same about the Qur'an. Judging the authenticity of a hadith based on its text alone is also destructive, making the mind the ultimate authority instead of Allah (ﷻ) or the Prophet (ﷺ). It also opens the door to people rejecting any hadith simply because they do not think the Prophet (ﷺ) would have said it, or because they do not like it, as if the Prophet (ﷺ) only said what pleases and makes sense to them.

Concerning the Hadith, the position of the truthful believer is the same as the position of Abū Bakr (ؓ). After the Prophet's night journey to the heavens, the disbelievers of Makkah came to Abū Bakr mockingly stating: "Look at what your companion is saying. He says he went to Jerusalem and came back in one night." Abū Bakr replied: "If he said it, then he is truthful." The job of the believers is simply to discover 'if he said it'; if the answer is yes, then they accept it even if their minds cannot fully comprehend it. The believers use their minds to discover if the Prophet (ﷺ) actually said it, not to reject everything that does not make sense to their limited minds. Perhaps the Prophet (ﷺ) said something that would not make sense to people of one generation, but people of a later generation would understand what he meant. Lang criticises some traditions that the scholars of Hadith consider authentic. Before looking into these traditions, I quote the eminent Yusuf al-Qaradawi cautioning against rejecting authentic hadith:

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[166] al-Bukhārī, *Imam Bukhari's Book of Muslim Morals and Manners*.

> Just as accepting invalid and fabricated hadiths and attributing them to God's Messenger is an offense, an absurdity and danger, so too, equal to it in nullity, is rejecting *ṣaḥīḥ* and established hadiths… Doing so entails evil conjecture about the Community, its scholars, and the leaders of its best generations and noblest summits… The important thing here is that rejection of a *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith is, in the religion, like the acceptance of a rejected hadith: they are on par. Acceptance of falsified hadiths enters into the religion what is not of it; rejection of authenticated hadiths drives out of the religion what is of it. Without doubt, both are reproached and censured alike – acceptance of the false and rejection of the true.[167]

Let us now look at some of the hadiths which Lang rejects based on their matn.

Women 'Deficient in Intellect and Religion'

Lang is cynical of the authenticity of hadith related to women, saying:

> There are a number of well-known Sayings of the Prophet that show much respect for women, but there are several that are rather uncomplimentary. There is a famous tradition that asserts that the majority of denizens of Hell are women, with some versions explaining that this is on account of their lesser

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[167] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. *Approaching the Sunnah: Comprehension and Controversy.* London, Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006, pp. 25-26.

> faith and inferior intelligence vis-à-vis men (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i).[168]

Here is the text which Lang is referring to:

« It was narrated on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (﵄)[169] (d. 74 AH/ 693 CE) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) observed: O womenfolk, you should give charity and ask much forgiveness, for I saw you as the bulk of the dwellers of hell.

A *jazlah*[170] among them asked: Why is it, Messenger of Allah, that our folk are the bulk of the people in hell?

The Prophet replied: You curse too much and are ungrateful to your spouses. I have not seen any lacking in *'aql* (intelligence) and *dīn* (religion) but overcoming an intelligent man, more than you.

She said: O Messenger of Allah, what is the lacking of 'aql and dīn?

He said: The witness of two women is equal to one man; that is a lacking of 'aql. You spend some nights in which you do not offer prayers, and in the month of Ramadan you do not observe fast; that is a lacking in dīn. » (Muslim)

Nowhere does this or any other hadith state that women have 'inferior intelligence vis-à-vis men', nor does it state that it is the reason why they are in hell; rather, it is because they curse too much and are ungrateful to their spouses. If looked at superficially, there are verses in the Qur'an that Lang must also reject due to their tone towards women. Although Lang himself quotes these verses, he interprets them to disprove the notion of Islam being a chauvinist religion. However, when it comes to the Hadith, he gives no explanation and makes absolutely no effort to interpret it; instead, he immediately resorts to scepticism concerning its authenticity.[171] If the same statement was depicting men instead of women, would those who follow the sceptical approach continue rejecting it? If that were the case, I reason that they would rather use this hadith to prove men are not superior to women and might even go a step further to proclaim women better than men. This is because it is embedded in the sceptical approach and taken as a given conceived truth, consciously or unconsciously, that the traditional role of women is inferior to men. Furthermore, if the same message found in the above hadith were in the Qur'an, would he have rejected them as not being from Allah (﷾)? It is important that we do not judge the Qur'an and Sunnah through the lens of culture. Simply because Western society surmises that Islam is unjust to women, we should not read that through the texts of its sources. In the Qur'an, Allah (﷾) has stated that men are responsible for providing for their spouses and offspring:

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[168] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 248. Lang goes on to criticise two other hadiths that are 'uncomplimentary' towards women. My intent is not to counter every hadith he has criticised; rather, it is to demonstrate the flaw in his methodology of criticism. Whoever wants to peruse an explanation for these hadiths can refer to works of Hadith commentary.

[169] 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was a Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) and a son of the second Caliph. He was a prominent authority in Hadith and law. See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb*, 950-55.

[170] I intentionally did not translate some words in this hadith because they will soon be explained.

﴿ ... وَعَلَى ٱلْمَوْلُودِ لَهُۥ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ ... ﴿٢٣٣﴾ ﴾

(سورة البقرة: الآية ٢٣٣)

﴾...The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child...﴿ *(Qur'an 2: 233)*

Is this oppressive toward males since it is 'unfairly' asking them to provide for women and not vice versa? Picture living in a society that labels Islam as being unfair towards men. Their arguments may include the following: "Islam favours women because men have to earn a living and support women, while if a woman works and supports a man, it is considered as a charity to him. Women have a right to the wealth of their husbands and male relatives, but a man does not have the right to lay a hand on a single penny of her wealth or possessions. Men are obliged to perform the Friday prayer, while women are excused and can pray ẓuhr at home instead. During menstruation, women are allowed to take a break from prayer, but men who work so hard earning a living are not exempt even from a single prayer. The assignment of jihad is upon men and not women, therefore men must risk their lives in defence of the female population. When a woman travels, she is accompanied by a man who serves as a guardian and protector for her, but a man gets no guard because he is deemed as a servant to the female gender."

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[171] When it came to the 'beating verse' in the Qur'an, Lang dedicated a total of 17 pages in explaining it. Yet, not even one paragraph has been written to attempt to interpret this hadith before branding it as a later fabrication. See: Lang, *Losing My Religion*, pp. 425-442.

One who lives in such a society may begin rejecting certain hadiths that seem pro-female and re-interpreting texts that appear to give males a lower status. Therefore, it is important that one does not base the interpretation of the texts on the biases of cultures, but approaches them with an open mind and pure heart, seeking the true intent of the Creator. The motive should not be to prove that Islam conforms to any particular society's perceptions of right or wrong.

The Prophet (ﷺ) told this group of women that he saw more women in hell than men; when asked why, he replied that it was because they were ungrateful and cursed much. It is well established that the Prophet's method of correcting people was to address them as a group, not as individuals, and certainly not singling them out in front of others – which would have caused undue embarrassment. Hence, this could have been a bad habit of a handful of the women present, and the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed all the women rather than pointing out those of whom he was referring to. Concerning his statement that there were more women in hell, it could mean one of two things:

1) He was speaking to the women who were present – the majority of the women in that gathering were in hell, however this is unlikely since they were Companions.

2) There will actually be more women in hell than men. In hell, there must be either more men or more women; there is no reason to hasten to assume this is degrading women, rather it can simply be stating a fact. This is possible especially when keeping in mind that there are more women on earth than men. There are also some traditions which state that towards the end of times, the ratio of men to women will be 1 to 50.

We need to keep in mind the vast encompassing power of the meaning of words in the Arabic language. One example of this is the word ‘aql. The word ‘aql used in this hadith does not mean intelligence, but in this context it means understanding. In the actual hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) interpreted ‘aql to be specific regarding a woman's witnessing of business transactions. Since women during that time were mostly unfamiliar with business transactions, they consequently understood them less than men did, and the Prophet (ﷺ) simply stated this fact. Women have less ‘understanding'; when asked why, the Prophet (ﷺ) stated that it was because two female witnesses are required in business transactions. Another interesting point is that the woman who asked the Prophet (ﷺ) was described as a *jazlah*, which means a woman who has a well-grounded and excellent opinion.[172]

In his explanation of this hadith, Imam Nawawī defines a jazlah as a woman who has a powerful ‘aql and strong opinion.[173] Had this hadith been degrading the intelligence of women, this woman would not have been described as one with a powerful ‘aql. The Prophet (ﷺ)

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[172] Firozabādī, Muhammad ibn Ya‘qūb. *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ.* Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lit-Ṭibā‘ah wan-Nashr, 1971, vol. 1, p. 489. Also see: Ibn Zakariyā ibn Fāris, Aḥmad. *Mu‘jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah.* Egypt: Sharikat Maktabah wa Maṭba‘ah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalbī wa-Awlāduh, 1972, vol. 1, p. 454.

[173] An-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyā Muḥyī ad-Dīn ibn Sharaf. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bī Sharḥ an-Nawawī.* Al-Dirāsah: Dār Abī Ḥiyān, 1995, vol. 1, p. 344.

associated females of being less in ʻaql and deen to needing two witnesses and being unable to pray during menstruation; this does not mean that if a non-Muslim woman enters the folds of Islam, and starts observing these rules, she automatically becomes less intelligent. In addition, the Prophet (ﷺ) was amazed by the ability of women to defeat or overcome an extremely intelligent man. How can a woman who is deficient in intelligence defeat a man who is knowledgeable and intelligent?

Another point worth noting is that the Prophet (ﷺ) limited the women's deficiency in ʻaql to witnessing business transactions, and dīn to praying and fasting. This means that the deficiency is limited and temporary and does not persist throughout her life. The Prophet (ﷺ) explained that women are deficient in their dīn because during their menstrual cycle, they cannot pray or fast. The word 'dīn' in this hadith does not mean religion; instead, it is referring to the rituals of prayer and fasting. It is normal for the words Islam, *īmān* (faith), or dīn to refer to a specific deed, not the religion as a whole. In the Qur'an, Allah (﷾) has stated:

﴿ ... وَمَا كَانَ ٱللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَٰنَكُمْ ... ﴿١٤٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: الآية ١٤٣)

﴾...And Allah will not let your īmān be lost...﴿ *(Qur'an 2: 143)*

The context of the aforementioned verse is the changing of the qiblah from Jerusalem to Makkah. Some of the Companions feared that the prayers they had performed prior to the changing of the qiblah would be lost and in vain; therefore, Allah (﷾) revealed this verse and used the word īmān to mean prayer. This is only one solid example to show that at times, general words like īmān or dīn are used to refer to specific deeds. Thus, the Prophet (ﷺ) was stating that women have less fasting and prayer than men, which is a fact. This is in no way degrading them or implying that men superior; it is simply stating a reality, which no humans have any control over.

Regarding the word 'dīn' in this hadith, its meaning must be something specific, because the Prophet (ﷺ) interpreted it as such.

He stated that it meant a woman's prayer and fasting. In other words, the word 'dīn' does not mean the actual religion; rather, it means the rituals of fasting and praying. Fasting and praying are rituals from which women are exempt during menstruation; therefore, they essentially perform fewer rituals than men. This does not mean they are deficient in religion; in fact, they will be rewarded for not performing these rituals, because Allah (ﷻ) had prohibited them from doing so during menstruation. Hence, they are obeying Him through the very act of not praying and fasting during these times. Does it make any sense that Allah (ﷻ) would order them not to pray and fast during certain times, or excuse them from these duties, and then punish them for obeying His commands? Such assumptions are barely comprehensible.

Lang goes on to say:

> My intuition is that these traditions reflect predominant attitudes of early Muslim society projected back to the Prophet.[174]

We must note that this is yet again an extremely unscholarly approach. One's 'intuition' is in no way concrete proof or evidence of one's truthfulness.[175] In order for a hadith to be considered authentic (as the above quoted hadith is) all of its narrators must meet the conditions of 'adālah (trustworthiness), which maintains that one is not affected by cultural or societal attitudes; otherwise, such an individual does not meet the criteria of 'adālah and his narrations are rejected. Affected and influenced by the predominant attitudes of the western society, Lang projects these very attitudes onto his own scrutinising of the Hadith. When looked at superficially, it appears as if he is criticising the narrators of the hadith; but it soon becomes apparent that he rejects the hadith based only upon the influence of the Western society and not the narrators.

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[174] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 248.

[175] Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqui (also sp. Siddiqi) criticises Juynboll for relying too much on his intuition. He states: "A noticeable fault in Juynboll's work is his explicit and frequent reliance on his own 'intuition'." See Siddiqi (1993) *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, and Special Features*, p. 133. This is yet another indication of how Lang's approach is similar to that of Juynboll.

There are numerous examples of individuals in the early Muslim society demonstrating the exact opposite of what Lang assumes of them. An example of this is the hadith of Fāṭimah bint Qays (*raḍiya Allāhu 'anhā* – may Allah be pleased with her)[176] (d. 50 AH/ 670 CE), who reported that when she was divorced from her husband, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not require him to provide her with accommodations and expenses during her waiting period.

'Umar (ؓ)[177] (d. 23 AH/ 644 CE), 'Ā'ishah (ؓ)[178], Zayd ibn Thābit (ؓ)[179] (d. 45 AH/ 666 CE) and other jurists rejected this hadith and argued that it contradicts the Qur'anic command that men must support their divorced wives during their waiting period. If they had been motivated by patriarchal attitudes, they would have been receptive to the hadith of Fāṭimah (ؓ) without question or objection, since it appears to favour men.[180]

Another instance took place during the time of Abū Bakr's caliphate. 'Umar (ؓ) divorced the mother of his son 'Āṣim. Later, he saw her with his son and took him from her. She appealed to Abū Bakr (ؓ), and he judged in her favour. 'Umar was one of the most senior of all the Companions and a dear friend of Abū Bakr's, and he argued that he had more to offer the boy, but none of that swayed Abū

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[176] Fāṭimah bint Qays (ؓ) was a female Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ). See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb,* 1901.

[177] 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ؓ) was the second Caliph and the Prophet's father in-law. See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb,* 1144-59.

[178] 'Ā'ishah bint Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq (ؓ) was the wife of the Prophet (ﷺ). See *Istī'āb* 1881-1885.

[179] Zayd ibn Thābit (ؓ) was the personal scribe of the Prophet (ﷺ). See Y. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb,* 537-540.

[180] Akram, Mohammad. *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam.* London: Interface Publications, 2007, p. 6.

Bakr's judgment. He told 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) that: "The moisture of her lips is better for him than the honey in your house".[181]

There are multitudes of examples of women scholars who taught leading Hadith scholars and jurists; these women were praised for their intelligence, piety and righteousness. Moreover, Hadith scholars never questioned a hadith simply because it was narrated by a woman; rather, they would accept it just as they would if it had been narrated from a man. Had they been affected by these so-called 'predominant attitudes of early Muslim society', this would have been apparent in their judgement of women narrators, among other things.

In the preface to his book on women Hadith scholars, Mohammad Akram Nadwi says:

> I have worked through much material over a decade to compile biographical accounts of 8,000 *muḥaddithāt*. Not one of them is reported to have considered the domain of family life inferior or neglected duties therein, or considered being a woman undesirable or inferior to a man…[182]

It is inconceivable that these 'predominant attitudes' toward women would not have surfaced or permeated from a single one of these biographies. Although Lang seems to have come to the conclusion that this was the predominant attitude of the early Muslim society based on subjective evidence, history proves otherwise.

To conclude, this hadith is an authentic one, even though it might be difficult to understand when looked at superficially or through the lens of Western society – especially as we live in a culture that is ultra-sensitive towards women's rights. The platforms from which we judge the verses of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) should not be reflective of the viewpoints of our cultures. Instead, we must approach the Qur'an and Sunnah with the recognition that we use them to judge the good and bad of our cultures and not vice versa. It is very hazardous to become sceptical towards every hadith that one has difficulty understanding or that makes one feel uncomfortable or agitated. I have therefore limited myself to interpreting the above hadith using the explanation given for it by the Prophet (ﷺ); many might go to extremes by either rejecting it or using linguistic gymnastics in order to interpret the text to give it a meaning with which modern Western culture is comfortable. When one does not understand a verse or hadith, scepticism is not the Islamic way of dealing with it. Allah (ﷻ) has stated that even in the Qur'an, there are verses that are unclear, and He has warned us in this regard:

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[181] Akram, *Al-Muhaddithat*, p. 7.

[182] Akram, *Al-Muhaddithat*, p. xv.

﴿ ... فَأَمَّا ٱلَّذِينَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَٰبَهَ مِنْهُ ٱبْتِغَآءَ ٱلْفِتْنَةِ وَٱبْتِغَآءَ
تَأْوِيلِهِۦ ۗ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُۥٓ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ ۗ وَٱلرَّٰسِخُونَ فِى ٱلْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِهِۦ كُلٌّ
مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّنَا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّآ أُو۟لُوا۟ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ۝٧ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: الآية ٧)

﴿...As for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is unclear, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it [their own] interpretation. But none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none are reminded except those who have understanding.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 7)*

'Prostrating to her Husband'

Lang goes on to say:

> A wife's subservience to her husband is enshrined in the hadith in which the Prophet asserts that if it were permissible for anyone to prostrate before another person, he would have commanded women to prostrate before their spouses (Muslim).[183]

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[183] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 248.

Here is the hadith he is referring to:

> The Prophet (ﷺ) said: « If I had ordered anyone to prostrate to anyone, I would have ordered the woman to prostrate to her husband. » (Muslim, at-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad and others)

Many who read this hadith become uncomfortable, which is understandable because of the culture of the society in which we live. However, on what basis is this hadith being rejected? One's intuition or culture is certainly not an empirical or pragmatic method to judge a hadith. The word the Prophet (ﷺ) used in this hadith for 'if' is *'law'*, which indicates impossibility. In Arabic, there are three words that are translated as 'if': *law*, *idhā*, and *in*. Each of these words carries a different connotation, but unfortunately has no translation in English other than the word 'if'. The word *law*, which is used in this hadith, means an 'if' of impossibility, of a surety that it will never happen. It is similar to saying: "If humans could fly," or "If only the day had more hours." That is why some scholars have stated that anytime the word 'law' is mentioned in the Qur'an, it means the impossibility of it ever happening; in other words, it is something which will never occur, such as:

﴿... وَلَوْ رُدُّوا۟ لَعَادُوا۟ لِمَا نُهُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَـٰذِبُونَ ٢٨﴾ (سورة أنعام: الآية ٢٨)

﴿...And **if** they were returned, they would certainly return to the things they were forbidden, for they are indeed liars.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 28)*

﴿وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ فَظَلُّوا۟ فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ ١٤﴾

(سورة حجر: الآية ١٤)

﴿Even **if** we opened out to them a gate from heaven, and they were to continue ascending therein.﴾ *(Qur'an 15: 14)*

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ إِلَيْهِمُ ٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوا۟ لِيُؤْمِنُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ١١١﴾

(سورة أنعام: الآية ١١١)

﴿Even if we did send unto them angels, and the dead did speak unto them, and we gathered together all things before their very eyes, they are not the ones to believe, unless it is in Allah's plan. But Most of them are ignorant.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 111)*

There are many more verses in the Qur'an that use this word to clearly indicate impossibility. The Prophet (ﷺ) was not stating that he would order a woman to prostrate to her husband, but had he (and he would not have) ordered anyone to prostrate to another human, it would be a woman to her husband. This hadith in no way contradicts the Qur'an, the well-established Sunnah or logical reasoning. The Prophet (ﷺ) is simply emphasising the importance of a wife's obedience to her husband, something the Qur'an also emphasises. If one is to reject such hadiths, then in accordance with the same logic, one must also reject certain verses from the Qur'an, such as:

﴿ لَّوْ أَرَادَ ٱللَّهُ أَن يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَّٱصْطَفَىٰ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۚ سُبْحَـٰنَهُۥ ۖ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ
ٱلْوَٰحِدُ ٱلْقَهَّارُ ﴿٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة زمر: الآية ٤)

﴿Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son, He could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He does create: but glory be to Him! He is Allah, the one, the Irresistible.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 4)*

﴿ قُلْ إِن كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَـٰنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا۠ أَوَّلُ ٱلْعَـٰبِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ ﴾ (سورة زخرف: الآية ٨١)

﴿Say: If the Most Gracious had a son, I would be the first among the worshippers.﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 81)*

Is this the methodology that Lang and others want to use instead of that of the Hadith scholars? Is it a scholarly approach to reject certain hadiths and declare that they cannot be the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ) only because one feels so culturally reprehensive about their content? On what basis is this claim against the authenticity of Hadith made? Would we then also have to adjust to or perhaps even delete all those verses in the Qur'an that make people feel uncomfortable or appear to degrade women? This is a clear misunderstanding resulting from not knowing the language that the Prophet (ﷺ) used. This is yet another problem which results from basing one's study on translations.

Had we not been living in the West in this particular era (especially after September 11, 2001), many would not have seen a problem with this hadith, nor would they have felt the need to write about it. It is highly unlikely that those living in a different time and place would have come to the same conclusion about this hadith. The pressure of feminism, human rights, equality (not that these are not important, but unfortunately taken to extremes in many cases) and other similar movements causes some Muslims to come to these conclusions.

My intention here is to explain these hadiths properly without denying that some do misinterpret them and, as a result, some Muslim women are treated inappropriately. This explanation does not seek to hide the reality of what goes on in certain Muslim communities, nor does it seek to dismiss the concerns for the rights of women. It is important, however, that Muslims strive for a respected and cherished position for women within the proper framework of the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is not an acceptable approach to merely copy the latest secular, western concepts of feminism, and deny the role of the Sunnah in Islam.

'Adālah (trustworthiness) of the Companions

Lang doubts that the Companions are all trustworthy, or that the concept of their trustworthiness has always been something that is agreed upon. This is an inference that Juynboll has also attempted to prove. In the following quote, we can see that Lang is just reiterating Juynboll's conclusions:

> As mentioned previously, the doctrine of collective *ta`dil* of the Companions, which seems to have won near universal acceptance among *hadith* scholars by the fifth Islamic century, holds that the Companions are free of falsehood in transmitting prophetic *hadiths*. In the earlier centuries the veracity of certain Companions was at times challenged. We even find

in the *Hadith* corpus instances of companions distrusting one another.[184] However, no Companion was subject to as much critical scrutiny as Abu Hurayrah.[185] Apparently one point of contention was that he is credited with having transmitted many more traditions than any other Companion, even though he was with the Prophet for just three years. The following two reports from Bukhari have the appearance of unsophisticated attempts at an explanation.

> Abū Hurayrah narrated: The people say that Abu Hurayrah narrates too many narrations, but God knows whether I say the truth or not. They also ask: "Why do the emigrants and the Ansar not narrate as he does?" In fact, my emigrant brothers were busy trading in the markets, and my Ansar brothers were busy with their properties. I was a poor man keeping the company of the Messenger of God and was satisfied with what filled my stomach. So I used to be present while they were absent, and I used to remember while they forgot.
>
> Abu Hurayrah narrated: I said to the Messenger of God, "I hear many narrations from you but I forget them." The Messenger of God said, "Spread your *rida'* (cloak)." I did so and then he moved his hands as if filling them with something (and emptied them in my rida') and then said, "Take and wrap this over your body." I did it and after that I never forgot anything.[186]

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[184] Here, Lang is citing G.H.A. Juynboll's *Muslim Tradition*. Juynboll does not give a single authentic hadith in which any Companion calls the other a liar. The Companions did indeed differ with each other in hadiths. They even accused each other of misunderstanding Hadith, but never of lying. Juynboll relies heavily on *Qabūl al-Akhbār wa Ma'rifat ar-Rijāl* of 'Abū Qāsim al-Balkhī, a Mu'tazilī scholar who wrote his book with the intention of attacking the science of Hadith.

[185] Once again, Lang cites G.H.A. Juynboll, who does not give any authentic or reliable narration that Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) was accused of lying.

[186] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, pp. 252-253.

It appears that Lang is accusing Hadith scholars of either fabricating these two hadiths in order to defend the concept of the trustworthiness of the Companions, or not noticing that these hadiths were fabricated. There is nothing 'unsophisticated' about these narrations; the first mentions that Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) was more dedicated to learning the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) than were the other Companions, and consequently, he memorised more hadiths. Even though a teacher may have many students, not all of them are at the same level. Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) was a Companion, who ascertained that all of his time was spent in learning from the Prophet (ﷺ) – it is only natural that he would have memorised more hadiths than the others. Unable to give any evidence for his claims against Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) or the trustworthiness of the rest of the Companions, Lang resorts to citing Juynboll, who credits *at-Taqdīm* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzi[187] (d. 327 AH/ 938 CE) with being the earliest work to mention this concept and therefore dates it to the final decades of the third century.[188] However, Juynboll ignores Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidi's[189] (d. 207 AH/ 822 CE) definition of a Companion in Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230 AH/ 845 CE)[190] *Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*:

> Whoever saw the Messenger of God, and saw his forbearance (*ḥilm*), and submitted and understood (*'aqala*) the religion and its goodness (*raḍiyahu*) is a companion of the Prophet, in our opinion, even if it was for just one hour of the day… All of the

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[187] Ibn Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī was a Hadith scholar and son of the famous Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī.

[188] Juynboll, G. H. A. *Muslim Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 194-195.

[189] Al-Wāqidī, Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidī was an expert jurist and historian from Madinah, also the teacher of Ibn Sa'd. He has great importance in the Arabic history due to the nature of his methodology as well as the quantity and quality of information he passed on. See S. Leder, *EI*2, art. *Al-Wāḳidī.*

[190] Ibn Sa'd, Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Mani', is famous for his biographical work *Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr.* See J.W. Fück, *EI*2, art. *Ibn Sa'd.*

> companions (*aṣḥāb*) of the Messenger of God were Imāms who should be emulated and whose actions have been preserved. They were asked to issue legal rulings and did so, they heard *ḥadīth*, and they conveyed them.[191]

This predates ar-Rāzi's definition by a century. Moreover, Mālik (d. 179 AH/ 795 CE) considered vilifying the Companions to be a great sin and insisted that anyone who did so should be expelled from Madinah and lose the right to receive the spoils of war. Mālik used verses 8-10 of sūrat *al-Ḥashr* as evidence for his stance.[192] In al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi's *al-Kifāyah*, the same work that Juynboll uses to prove that no early scholar interpreted verses from the Qur'ān to establish the trustworthiness of the Companions, there is a quote by Abū Zur'ah[193] (d. 264 AH/ 878 CE), who states:

> If you see a man who criticizes any of the companions of the Messenger peace be upon him then know that he is a *zindīq*. That is because the Messenger and the Qur'ān are truth according to us. The companions of the Messenger peace be upon him are the ones who passed down to us the Qur'ān and teachings of the Prophet. They intend to criticize our witnesses in order make the Qur'ān and sunnah false. They are more deserving of criticism and they are *zanādiqa*.[194]

Furthermore, in his *Ta'wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth*, Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH/ 889 CE), defends the Companions against accusations from the Muʿtazilī Abū Is-ḥāq an-Nadhām (d. 231/845).[195] An-Nadhām accuses the Companions of lying, contradicting themselves and fabricating things in the religion. Ibn Qutaybah, a leading scholar of his time, clearly upheld the concept of the collective trustworthiness of the Companions, although he did not mention it by name. This supports the stance that it was an early concept that was always agreed upon and understood.

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[191] Translation taken from: Lucas, Scott C. "Constructive Critics, Hadith Literature, and the Articulation of Sunni Islam." *The Legacy of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Ma'īn, and Ibn Ḥanbal*. Boston: Brill, 2004.

[192] Abū Zahra, Muhammad. *The Four Imams: Their Lives, Works and their Schools of Thought*. London: Dar Al-Taqwa, 2005, p. 62.

[193] Abū Zur'ah ar-Rāzī 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abdul Karīm was an eminent scholar of Hadith, considered an Imam in the science of narrator criticism.

[194] al-Baghdādī, al-Khaṭīb. *Al-Kifāyah fī 'ilm ar-Riwāyah*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006, p. 48.

Ignoring this evidence, Juynboll alleges that the trustworthiness of the Companions was never even 'hinted at', and due to Lang's lack of research and access to these sources, he followed in Juynboll's footsteps. Although not as explicit, the fact that the earliest studies of hadith transmitters do not criticise the Companions is further evidence that establishes that their trustworthiness was an accepted concept in early Islam. The fact that the word 'adālah' was not used is not necessarily evidence that the concept did not exist. There is no substantial proof of early scholars who criticised the honesty of the Companions. Had they not considered them upright, we would have certainly noticed that in their works. This again shows the danger of arriving at conclusions based on a partial study of Hadith using only English-language sources. Juynboll uses two verses quoted by al-Baghdādī in *al-Kifāyah* to establish that the concept of the trustworthiness of the Companions did not exist in early Islam. He says:

> The Qur'ān text referred to by al-Khaṭīb comprises two verses: *Kuntum khayra ummatin ukhrijat li'n-nās* (III, 110) (ī.e. you are the best people sent forth to mankind) and: *Wa-kadhālika jaʿalnākum ummatan wasaṭan* (II, 143) (ī.e. thus we have made you a people in the middle); when we check these verses in the oldest *tafsīr* works available, we see that nowhere among the numerous explanations is the issue of the collective *taʿdīl* in **ḥadīth matters** hinted at, although in the case of the word

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[195] Ibn Qutaybah, 'Abdullah ibn Muslim. *Ta'wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth.* Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1966, pp. 46-64.

wasaṭan (II, 143) a generally recognized interpretation was that it meant *'adl*, plural *'udūl*, in **bearing witness** (*shahāda*) to the prophet's message.[196]

As Juynboll lists two of the verses quoted by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Lang himself states that these two verses are usually cited to establish the collective trustworthiness of the Companions.[197] What both Juynboll and Lang intentionally or unintentionally ignore is the fact that al-Khaṭīb tells us that these two verses have a general meaning although they seem to be specifically speaking about the Companions. Al-Khaṭīb then goes on to quote many more verses from the Qur'an that are explicitly and unambiguously describing Allah's satisfaction with the Companions. He has not just quoted the ones mentioned by Juynboll and Lang.[198]

﴿ لَّقَدْ رَضِىَ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ ٱلشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِى
قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنزَلَ ٱلسَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَٰبَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا ﴿١٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة الفتح: الآية ١٨)

﴿Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they pledged to you under the tree, He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down tranquility upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory.﴾ *(Qur'an 48: 18)*

﴿ وَٱلسَّٰبِقُونَ ٱلْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُهَٰجِرِينَ وَٱلْأَنصَارِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَٰنٍ
رَّضِىَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى تَحْتَهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ
فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾ ﴾ (سورة توبة: الآية ١٠٠)

﴿And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhājirūn [those who migrated] and the Anṣār [the citizens of Madinah] and also those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.﴿

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[196] Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 20.

[197] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 78.

[198] al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah*, p. 46.

(Qur'an 9: 100)

﴿ وَٱلسَّٰبِقُونَ ٱلسَّٰبِقُونَ ۝١٠ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ ٱلْمُقَرَّبُونَ ۝١١ فِى جَنَّٰتِ ٱلنَّعِيمِ ۝١٢ ﴾

(سورة واقعة: الآية ١٠ – ١٢)

﴾And those foremost [in faith] will be foremost [in the hereafter]. These will be those nearest to Allah in the gardens of delight [paradise].﴿ *(Qur'an 56: 10-12)*

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِىُّ حَسْبُكَ ٱللَّهُ وَمَنِ ٱتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝٦٤ ﴾

(سورة أنفال: الآية ٦٤)

﴾O Prophet, Allah is sufficient for you and for the believers who follow you.﴿ *(Qur'an 8: 64)*

﴿ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ ٱلْمُهَٰجِرِينَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا۟ مِن دِيَٰرِهِمْ وَأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ
ٱللَّهِ وَرِضْوَٰنًا وَيَنصُرُونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥٓ ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلصَّٰدِقُونَ ۝٨ وَٱلَّذِينَ
تَبَوَّءُو ٱلدَّارَ وَٱلْإِيمَٰنَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِى
صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ أُوتُوا۟ وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۚ
وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِۦ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝٩ ﴾

(سورة الحشر: الآية ٨ – ٩)

﴾And for the poor emigrants, who were expelled from their homes and their property, seeking bounties from Allah and to please Him. and helping Allah and his Messenger, such are indeed the truthful. And those who, before them, had homes and had adopted the faith, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given, and give preference over

themselves, even though they were in need of it, and whoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful.﴿
(Qur'an 59: 8-9)

Juynboll informs us that the Qur'anic text referred to by al-Khaṭīb 'comprises two verses', and then goes on to cite the two verses most generally quoted by al-Khaṭīb. Had Juynboll also listed the other verses al-Khaṭīb mentions, it would have made our job much easier, since they quite clearly convey that Allah (ﷻ) is pleased with the Companions, and therefore their trustworthiness is established.

Another point is that Juynboll also assumes that the ta'dīl of the Companions is something of a later invention, because he could not find a hint of it in the earliest tafsīr works. This is a problem in the research method of Orientalists – they often refer to the wrong sources on a subject and consequently come to the wrong conclusions. It is not applicable to refer to works of tafsīr in order to research the history of Hadith. Ṭabari's tafsīr is not a place to find anything on the science of Hadith. His style is to mention a verse, list all the narrations about its interpretation and then give one interpretation more weight over the other.

After listing the many verses that establish the trustworthiness of the Companions, al-Khaṭīb goes on to list a number of hadiths which further prove their trustworthiness and then states:

> The narrations that carry this meaning are many, and they all conform to the text of the Qur'ān. All of this necessitates the purity of the companions, and the establishment of their probity and uprightness. None among them needs anyone else's *ta'dīl* along with Allah's *ta'dīl* of them, The One who sees their internal state. The companion will continue to have this attribute except if one of them does something that cannot denote anything but the intent to sin as well as it being outside the bounds of interpretation. In that case, he will lose his '*adāla*, but Allah has saved them from that and raised them above it. Had Allah and His messenger not said anything about

them from what we previously mentioned, we would have been obliged by their actions such as performing *hijra*, *jihād* and aiding, giving their innermost selves and wealth, fighting their fathers and children, sincerity in the religion, strong faith and certainty, to declare that their ‘*adāla* is definitive. As well as the belief in their uprightness and that they are the greatest of those who are declared upright and praised from the later generations ceaselessly.[199]

Abū Hurayrah (ؓ): Why So Many Narrations of Hadiths?

There are only two sayings which Lang refers to concerning Abū Hurayrah (ؓ). He uses these as evidence of other Companions criticising him. However, Lang does not give us the entire picture, for the Companions in fact said much good about Abū Hurayrah (ؓ). This is clear to anyone who looks up his biography in the studies of those who transmitted hadiths.

Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) did narrate more hadiths than any other Companion, even though he accepted Islam much later than many of them. Muṣṭafā as-Sibā‘ī points out that it is natural for people to wonder why Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) narrated more hadiths than the other Companions, even though he accepted Islam later than them. Those who wondered this were not the Companions, for the Companions themselves knew the reason; but those who questioned this were some *tābi‘īn* (‘successors’; those who knew or met any of the Companions and transmitted hadiths from them) and those who lived far from Madinah – in other words, those less connected. They asked Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) not out of doubt or in order to accuse him of lying, but rather to satisfy their own curiosity. Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) answered them, and we find no evidence that they did not believe him or criticised him. So where is the ‘much critical scrutiny’ of Abū Hurayrah (ؓ)? Since when is asking a question or satisfying one’s curiosity equal to ‘critical scrutiny’ or suspecting someone of lying?

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[199] al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah*, p. 48.

Sibāʿī goes on to point out that if the Companions had doubted Abū Hurayrah's truthfulness or his memory, they certainly would not have allowed him to continue narrating hadiths about the Prophet (ﷺ). Would ʿUmar (رضي الله عنه), who was known for his strictness and persistence for truth, have ignored him? Or would ʿĀ'ishah (رضي الله عنها) have remained silent, considering she was the one who went out to give victory to what was correct – in her view – to fight ʿAlī (رضي الله عنه)? Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) did not outlive many of the great Companions. Would they all have remained silent with regards to Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه)? These same people spoke the truth and replied to the one who made a mistake in a hadith even if it was ʿUmar (رضي الله عنه), the leader of the believers, or ʿĀ'ishah (رضي الله عنها), wife of the Prophet (ﷺ); so how could they remain silent regarding someone who was fabricating hadith and lying?[200]

Sibāʿī also notes that those questioning Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) were not Companions at all, because they asked "Why do the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār not narrate as he does?" Had they been among the Companions, they would not have referred to themselves as emigrants and Anṣār; instead, they would have stated, "Why do we not narrate as he does?" Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) himself replied by saying: "My emigrant brothers were busy trading in the markets, and my Anṣār brothers were busy with their properties… So I used to be present while they were absent, and I used to remember while they forgot." If he had been speaking directly to the Companions themselves, he would have said: "I used to be present while you were absent."[201]

Moreover, there is no evidence that indicates that the Companions doubted Abū Hurayrah's truthfulness; in fact, this example shows that the opposite is true:

> Nāfiʿ narrated that Ibn ʿUmar (رضي الله عنه) was told that Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said: Whoever accompanies the funeral procession will have a reward equal to one qīraṭ (a measurement of the reward from

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[200] as-Sibāʿī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā*, p. 287.

[201] as-Sibāʿī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā*, p. 288.

> Allah, sometimes meaning gold or a valley). Ibn 'Umar (ؓ) said of that: Abū Hurayrah talks of too enormous reward. 'Ā'ishah (ؓ) confirmed Abū Hurayrah's narration though, saying: I heard Allah's Apostle say something like that. Ibn 'Umar (ؓ) then said: We have lost numerous qīraṭs. (Bukhari)

We see from this narration that 'Ā'ishah (ؓ) attested to what Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) had narrated. Sibā'ī states that after this incident, Ibn 'Umar (d. 74 AH/ 693 CE) began narrating this hadith through Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) to the Prophet (ﷺ). Sibā'ī quotes Ibn 'Umar (ؓ) as saying to Abū Hurayrah (ؓ): "You were the one who stayed with the Messenger of Allah the most, and you have the most knowledge among us about his hadith."[202]

Finally, it is not clear how the second hadith mentioned by Lang is an attempt at an 'unsophisticated' explanation. In fact, this hadith was recorded by Bukharī, Muslim, Nasā'ī, Aḥmad, and Abū Nu'aym. The Prophet (ﷺ) prayed for Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) not to forget anything, and his prayer was answered; what part of that is 'unsophisticated' is beyond any logical comprehension. It appears that Lang was simply following in the footsteps of Juynboll, who is an inconsiderate detractor of Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) and the collective trustworthiness of the Companions. Those who deny the collective trustworthiness of the Companions seek to destroy the entire religion of Islam, because the Companions are the ones who passed this religion down to us; if they were not reliable, then by extension nothing we have today would be reliable.

Made-to-Order Hadiths?

Lang states:

> In the field of jurisprudence, we come upon many long-standing disputes in the classical period for which prophetic traditions were ultimately discovered that speak directly to them. For

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[202] as-Sibā'ī, *As-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā,* p. 288.

> instance, the legitimacy of *ijma'* (consensus) as a source of Islamic Law was much debated during Imam al-Shafi'i's time, who defends it in his *Risala*. Yet al-Shafi'ī, a leader of the *hadith* party was apparently unaware of the famous statement of the Prophet, "My community will never agree on an error" (al Tirmidhi), which establishes its validity.[203]

There is a difference of opinion regarding the authenticity of this hadith because of the reputation of the narrator, al-Mu'tamir ibn Sulaymān; scholars differ regarding his reliability. Let us take the side of caution and assume that al-Mu'tamir is unreliable. The same hadith is in *al-Mustadrak* with a different chain of narration through Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه)[204] (d. 68 AH/ 686-8 CE), and all of its narrators meet Bukhari's strict standards, with the exception of Ibrāhīm ibn Maymūn,[205] who is considered unreliable.[206] There is also another version of this same hadith in the *Musnad* of Imam Aḥmad.[207] Since Imam Aḥmad[208] (d. 241 AH/ 855 CE) studied under Imam ash-Shāfi'ī, this serves as evidence that the hadith did exist during his time and was not something that was projected back. Regardless of whether this hadith is authentic or not, it is the method Lang used in reaching his conclusion that concerns us.

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[203] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 252.

[204] 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās was called *al-Ḥibr* 'the doctor' or *al-Baḥr* 'the sea' because he was considered to be one of the greatest scholars of the first generation of Muslims. He played an important role in Qur'anic exegesis and is at times considered its father. See L. V. Vaglierī, *EI2*, art. '*Abd Allāh b. Al-'Abbās*.

[205] Ibrāhīm ibn Maymūn aṣ-Ṣan'ānī was a pious worshipper and upright narrator. I was unable to find his date of death.

[206] See *Mustadrak al-Ḥākim,* hadith no. 365.

[207] See *Musnad Imam Aḥmad,* hadith no. 2966.

[208] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the Imam of Baghdad, was a famous theologian, jurist and Hadith scholar and founder of one of the four Sunni legal schools. See H. Laoust, *EI2*, art. *Ahmad b. Ḥanbal.*

By making his statement above, Lang makes two main mistakes:

1) He misunderstood the nature of fiqh books. Ash-Shāfi‘i’s *Risāla* is a fiqh book, not a Hadith book; to learn about a hadith or its authenticity, one does not refer to books of fiqh. The nature of fiqh books is that they do not always quote or record the hadith or verse to support their argument. At times, they do not even quote it at all; this is because they may be writing to another scholar, who upon reading their stance may automatically know which verse or tradition they are referring to. Fiqh books may very well quote a hadith without the isnād, or quote the isnād once and then refrain from doing so throughout the rest of the book. At times, they would simply state something like ‘the hadith of ‘Umar (ؓ)’ or ‘the hadith of intentions’ and the other scholar would immediately know which hadith is being referred to. Those who do not have this background will easily get confused. Thus, if one bases his study of Hadith on fiqh literature, one will naturally come to the wrong conclusions, because the referencing of sources was insufficient.

2) Similar to Schacht, he uses the *e silentio*[209] argument to prove that a certain hadith must be fabricated since it was not quoted in earlier works. On this, Schacht says:

> The best way of proving that a tradition did not exist at a certain time is to show that it was not used as a legal argument in a discussion which would have made reference to it imperative, if it had existed… This kind of conclusion is furthermore made safe by Tr. VIII, 11, where Shaibānī says: “This is so unless the Medinese can produce a tradition in support of their doctrine,

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[209] An argument out of silence. It is an assumption, based on a lack of any reference to a subject in the works of an author, that either he was ignorant of it, or it did not exist at the time.

> but they have none, or they would have produced it." We may safely assume that the legal traditions with which we are concerned were quoted as arguments by those whose doctrine they were intended to support, as soon as they were put into circulation.[210]

Zafar Ishaq Ansari critiques this methodology and states that it suggests Muslim scholars of the second and third centuries were in a constant state of discussion, an assumption which is unacceptable to common sense. Ansari points out that it is highly unreasonable to give this argument any validity unless we were to make the following assumptions:

1) During the first two centuries of Islam, whenever legal doctrines were recorded, their supporting arguments, especially the hadiths, were also consistently mentioned.

2) A hadith known to one jurist or Hadith scholar must have necessarily been known to all other jurists and Hadith scholars of the time.

3) All the hadiths that were 'in circulation' at a particular period of time were duly recorded, widely publicised and preserved,so that if we cannot find a hadith mentioned in the works of a known scholar, then that is tantamount to proof of its non-existence during his time, both in his own region as well as the remaining parts of the Muslim world.[211]

M. al-Azami reiterates and adds to these points by stating that in order for Schacht's *e silentio* argument to be valid, the following points need to be proven:

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[210] Ansari, Zafar I. "The Authenticity of Traditions: A Critique of Joseph Schacht's Argument e Silentio." *Hamdard Islamicus* VII, no. 2, 1984, pp. 53-54.

[211] Ansari, "The Authenticity of Traditions", p. 53.

a) If a certain hadith was not mentioned by a certain scholar. it is proof that the scholar was ignorant of that hadith.

b) All the works of the early scholars have been preserved and printed and nothing is missing; thus, we possess all that they compiled.

c) One scholar's ignorance of a particular hadith is sufficient proof that the hadith did not exist.

d) Knowledge known to one scholar at a particular time must have been known to all his contemporaries in that field of knowledge.

e) When a scholar writes on a subject, he uses all the evidence available to him at the time.[212]

Both al-Azami and Ansarī go on and turn the tables on Schacht's method and find the hadiths mentioned in early works but not later works, both of them giving about twenty examples in each of their respective works. Ansarī uses the work of Shaybāni[213] (d. 189 AH/ 805 CE), who prepared an edition of Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'*; he compares the two and finds many omissions in the later work, including hadiths that supported Shaybāni's school of thought. Ansarī also compares the 'athār of Abū Yūsuf[214] (d. 182 AH/ 798 CE) and the 'athār of Shaybānī and finds numerous examples of hadiths found in the former but not the latter, even though Abū Yūsuf was older. Regarding fiqh works, Ansarī says:

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[212] Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, pp. 118-119.

[213] Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan was an eminent jursit of the Ḥanafī school and an immediate disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah and Abū Yūsuf. See E. Chaumont, *EI2*, art. *Al-Shaybānī.*

[214] Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm was a prominent religious lawyer, one of the founders of the Ḥanafī school of law and a companion of Abū Ḥanīfah.

> The composition of these works was motivated by a complex of factors. One of these was the desire to record the doctrines followed by the scholar's predecessors, especially the generally accepted doctrines of his school. It was for this reason that often it deemed sufficient to record the doctrines of one's school, without necessarily recording alongside in support of those doctrines, traditions from the Prophet or Companions. It is well-known that many doctrines derived from the Qur'ān were recorded in these writings without any reference to the relevant Qur'ānic verses. There is ample evidence to show that this was equally true in regard to traditions. There is a great number of instances where a jurist recorded the doctrine of his school on a legal question but did not care to cite the tradition which was relevant to and/or supportive of his doctrine, even though it can be incontrovertibly shown that he knew that tradition. Indeed, it would be interesting to explore the traditions found in the earlier works but not found in later works. This would mean working on the reverse of Schacht's assumption, and would, we may presume, produce quite startling results. We carried this out on a limited scale and found it of considerable significance. For if it can be shown – and in our view it can – that a large number of traditions found in earlier works are not found in works of a later period, let alone in contemporary works, and that the jurists of the period under discussion often felt themselves under no obligation to cite the many traditions which were known to them, even those that supported their doctrines, the ground of Schacht's argument is seriously put in doubt.[215]

Both al-Azami and Ansari do an excellent job in giving numerous examples of hadiths which are mentioned in earlier works and not in later works. Al-Azami points out that if we follow this method of criticism, it means that if one writer in the Middle East failed to mention London as one of the major cities in the world, then all the other writers who do mention it later would be guilty of coming together in creating a fictional city.[216] Ansari explains that even though there is no reason to believe that Shaybānī did not know these hadiths, he still does not record them; this fact falsifies the assumption underlying the method of Schacht (and in this case, we can say Lang), in his attempt to establish the 'growth of traditions'. The following possibilities have been ignored by Lang:

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[215] Ansari, "The Authority of Traditions", p. 52.

1) Imam ash-Shafi'ī may have heard and forgotten the hadith.

2) He might not have considered the hadith authentic, thus he did not quote it. This is a strong possibility, since the various chains of this hadith are narrated through al-Mu'tamir ibn Sulaymān, whom some scholars considered unreliable.

3) He might have quoted it, but in another one of his written works that has since been lost.

For Lang to discount all these considerations, as well as all of the evidence that hadiths are not always mentioned in fiqh books, and to insist on excessive cynicism cannot be considered a reliable or scholarly way to look at history. Lang goes on to say:

> Another point of contention among al-Shafi'i's colleagues was whether prophetic *sunnahs* on issues unmentioned in the Qur'an are binding. This time, however, al-Shafi'i is able to call upon a made to order *hadith.*
>
> Narrated Abu Rafi: The Prophet said: 'Let me not find any one of you reclining on his couch and saying when a command reaches him, "I do not know. We shall follow [only] what we find in the book of God."' (Abu Dawud)[217]

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[216] Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 116.
[217] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 253.

In the first case, regarding the hadith about consensus, Imam ash-Shāfi'ī mentioned a verse to support his view, and he might have felt that it was sufficient evidence. In this case, perhaps Imam ash-Shāfi'ī felt that he needed to support his stance with clearer evidence from the Sunnah, not only the Qur'an. It is unclear exactly what Lang means when he uses the phrase 'made to order hadith'; if he means that the scholars fabricated hadiths, this is in contradiction to what history tells us of the trustworthiness of the greatest scholars of Islam. If he means that they used fabricated hadiths, this is in contradiction to what we know of their scholarship, and a claim for which Lang has no evidence. Lang is basing his criticism of this hadith on a translation of a single book of fiqh written by Imam ash-Shāfi'ī – and there is no indication that he looked at any other sources. We must also keep in mind that Imam ash-Shāfi'ī was not concerned with gathering hadith; instead, he focused on hadiths that helped him establish the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. He was more concerned with defending the authority of Hadith. This is what earned him the title 'The Champion of the Sunnah' – not because he gathered the most hadiths or was the greatest expert in Hadith. Such a title would have better suited someone like Imam Bukhari.

'Umar (ؓ) and the Missing Verse

Lang goes on to claim that the stoning of married adulterers was also disputed in early Islam.[218] His commentary concerning this claim is as follows:

> Its proponents claimed that the Qur'anic punishment is aimed at unmarried adulterers and that the Prophet's *Sunnah* establishes a much harsher punishment for married offenders. Yet this would be an example of the *Sunnah* abrogating the Qur'an, which the majority of scholars could not accept.[219]

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[218] It was primarily the Khawārij and a group of the Mu'tazilah who disputed it.

[219] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, pp. 253-254.

It is incorrect to claim that this is an example of the Sunnah abrogating the Qur'an, because the stoning commandment did not replace the law of flogging; it only expanded it. This is an example of the Sunnah simply elaborating on what is already contained in the Qur'an, or explaining it in order to ease its implementation. An illustration of this is the ṣalāh; the Qur'an does not mention more than three times for prayer, nor does it mention the details of prayer, yet the Prophet (ﷺ) taught us to pray five times a day. This is not abrogation; instead, it is the explanation and expansion of the verses. The Prophet (ﷺ) also prohibited the consumption of donkey meat and wearing of gold and silk for men, although these points are not mentioned in the Qur'an.[220] Lang claims that the majority of scholars do not accept the idea of Sunnah abrogating the Qur'an (although in fact, most scholars do accept it)[221] and uses this as evidence against the legislation of stoning. However, in other places, he appears to entirely disregard what the majority of scholars have to say. The majority of scholars accept that stoning is the divine legislation for the adulterer. Lang then quotes the following narration:

> Mālik related to me that Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd heard Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab say: When 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb came from Mina,[222] he made his camel kneel at al-Abtah,[223] then he gathered a pile of small stones, cast his cloak over them and dropped to the ground. He raised his hands to the sky and said:

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[220] Also see Ibn Ḥazm's argument on food and excrement, in Chapter 5.

[221] The majority of scholars accept that both the Sunnah and the Qur'an can abrogate each other. It was only Imam ash-Shāfi'ī who stated otherwise. Even the majority of later Shāfi'ī scholars disagreed with the Imam of their school, including Imam al-Ghazālī and Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī. All the other schools of thought, including the Ẓāhiris, accept that the Sunnah and Qur'an can abrogate each other. In fact, part of the evidence used by these scholars is the ruling on stoning, which Lang attempts to cast doubt on.

[222] Mina is on the outskirts of Makkah, a place pilgrims visit in order to perform certain rituals of Hajj.

[223] A famous valley between Makkah and Mina.

> O Allah! I have become old and my strength has weakened. My flock is scattered. Take me to You with nothing missed out and without having neglected anything.
>
> Then he went to Madinah and addressed the people. He said: People! Recommended acts have been laid down for you. Obligations have been placed upon you. You have been left with a clear way unless you lead people astray right and left.
>
> He struck one of his hands on the other and then said: Take care lest you destroy the verse of stoning so that one will say: We do not find two prescribed punishments in the book of Allah.
>
> The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stoned, so we have stoned. By He in Whose Hand my soul is, had it not been that people would say that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb has added to the book of Allah Almighty, we would have written it: The full-grown man and the full-grown woman, stone them absolutely. We have certainly recited that.
>
> "Mālik said: Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd said that Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab said: Dhul-Ḥijjah[224] had not passed before 'Umar was murdered, may Allah have mercy on him.
>
> Yaḥyā said that he had heard Mālik say: As for his words: The full-grown man and the full-grown woman, he meant: The man and the woman who have been married, stone them absolutely."[225]

Ibn Ḥajar sheds some light on this hadith, stating that 'Umar (﵁) said: "When this verse came down, I approached the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked him: Should I write it down? It was as if he hated that." Then

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[224] The twelfth month of the Islamic Hijrī calendar, in which the Hajj takes place.

[225] *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, book 41, no. 41.1.10.

'Umar (ؓ) said: "Can you not see that if the old man who has not married fornicates, he gets whipped, and that if the young man who has married commits adultery, he gets stoned?" This is the reason the verse was taken out of the Qur'an, because the verse stated 'the elderly man and the delderly woman'.

Bringing attention to other narrations that are in agreement with this, Ibn Ḥajar quotes two such narrations found in *Ḥilyat al-'Awlīyā'* of Abū Nu'aym al-Isfahānī[226] (d. 430 AH/ 1038 CE): 'Umar (ؓ) said: "I would have written it at the end of the Qur'an." He also said: "Had it not been that people would say that 'Umar added to the Qur'an that which is not in it I would have written it, for we read that if the elderly man and the elderly woman fornicate, then stone them both completely, as a retribution from Allah, and Allah is Honourable and All-Wise."[227] The reason this verse was abrogated was because it mentions 'elderly man' and 'elderly woman', whereas the ruling on whether someone should be stoned has nothing to do with age; it depends on whether one was married or not. The Prophet (ﷺ) noticeably did not want this verse to be written down because it was not essentially a part of the Qur'an; if it had been divinely revealed to him that it was a part of the Qur'an, he certainly would not have objected to its recording along with other verses.

Further evidence that the ruling of stoning is still to be implemented is that the Companions and those present stayed silent and did not oppose 'Umar's statement while he was on the pulpit. There was a consensus among the Companions that the recitation of the verse of stoning had been abrogated, but that its ruling remained. How can we accept that the Companions, with whom Allah (ﷻ) is pleased and who have sacrificed so much for Islam, came together and did away with this verse – especially keeping in mind that the ruling remained, so there would have been no benefit in eliminating it?

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[226] Abū Nu'aym al-Isfahānī Aḥmad ibn 'Abdullāh was an authority in jurisprudence and Sufism. See J. Pedersen, *EI2*, art. *Abū Nu'aym al-Isfahānī.*
[227] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī,* pp. 175-176.

Does it make sense that 'Umar (﵁), the Companion who feared no one, would know that the Qur'an was lacking and let it remain that way out of fear of people?[228] Even if 'Umar (﵁) did think that this verse was still part of the Qur'an, there is nothing wrong with that since he was human and could make a mistake. The fact that an individual may think there is something missing from the Qur'an does not decrease its authenticity, since the Qur'an is protected through the believers as a whole and not through any specific person. However, this is not what the hadith means; yet, due to his misunderstanding, Lang rejected this hadith without taking into consideration the context and other hadiths.

Finally, regarding the stoning verse, Lang states:

> There are numerous examples like these in the tradition literature of seemingly made-to-order *hadiths* that provide unequivocal proof for the correctness of various juridical stances that were taken in long-standing debates. If these traditions are genuine, it is surprising that these debates persisted for so long – often into the late second and third Islamic centuries – and that these extremely convenient traditions are not cited in earlier works that discuss the topics they address.[229]

Since many hadiths have nothing to do with legal matters, the researcher must go beyond the writings of a few famous jurists before making any sweeping theories concerning the entire corpus of Hadith. In reality, we do not know if the early books reflect juridical disputes. Concerning this, Harald Motzkī states:

> This *e silentio* argument has two weak points, one theoretical, the other, practical. On the theoretical side, the fact that a tradition was not used by someone may have several reasons;

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[228] It is narrated that due to his courage and bravery, 'Umar (﵁) publicly announced his migration, whereas the rest of the Companions migrated in secret.

[229] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 255.

> non-existence is only one of them. The simplest explanation may be that this person did not (yet) know the *ḥadīṯ* in question. This, of course, is not the same as the tradition not having existed at all. The person may also have had reasons, ones not known to us, which prevented him from citing the tradition. On the practical side, the weak point in Schacht's reasoning is that in most cases we do not know whether or not the sources actually reflect a juridical dispute. Whether collections of legal traditions are compiled as complete arsenals of legal ammunition to be used in disputes or whether they contain a personal choice of the compiler is not a matter which we can know with complete certainty.[230]

As historians, we must not look at previous societies and times through the lenses of our own era and lifestyle. Today, we have all the books of Hadith easily accessible to us; if one wants to find a hadith, one can easily search for using a computer program, and all the relevant hadiths will appear. This was not the case for early scholars.[231] Hence, for them to not have known or quoted a hadith that would have ended 'long-standing legal debates' is completely understandable. Aside from what we have stated regarding the *e silentio* argument, Ibn Taymiyyah[232] (d. 728 AH/ 1328 CE) brings up some important points in his *Raf' ul-Malm 'an il-'A'immah il-'Alām*, which are worth noting. Ibn Taymiyyah states that if the early scholars had an opinion that contradicts a hadith, they must be excused because of the following possibilities:[233]

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[230] Motzki, Harald, "Dating Muslim Traditions", p. 215.

[231] Despite having great technology at hand, there is still no scholar who knows every single hadith. A scholar may not even know a famous hadith on an issue that is being debated today. This does not represent a lack of scholarship on their part.

[232] Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah was a Ḥanbalī theologian and jurist. See H. Laoust, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Taymiyyah.*

[233] Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqī ad-Dīn. *Raf'ul Malm 'an al-'A'imma al-'Alām.* Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003, pp. 4-23.

1) The hadith never reached him, and whoever does not know the hadith is not held accountable for having an opinion contradictory to it. Not knowing a hadith is especially common for the early scholars, for no scholar ever had knowledge of all the hadiths in existence. Claiming that one single Companion or scholar was aware of all the hadiths is impossible. He goes on to give numerous examples of great Companions who held opinions contradictory to a hadith, and once they learned the hadith, they changed their opinion. He then states:

> These (the Companions) were the most knowledgeable among the *Ummah* and unsurpassed in understanding, the most pious and the best of it, and those who came after are less so. So for some of the Sunnah to be unknown to them is more apt and that needs no explanation. Whoever believes that every authentic hadith has reached every scholar, or a specific scholar, has made a grave erroneous mistake.

2) One cannot logically argue that these hadiths had been compiled so their being unknown is something unlikely, because these collections of hadiths were compiled after the great imams who are followed. Additionally, one cannot rationally argue that all the hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) have been included in certain compilations. Even if we assume it is true, not every scholar knows everything that is written in books. One might have many books, but not necessarily know everything that they contain. In fact, the scholars who preceded the advent of these compilations had more knowledge of the Sunnah than we do today, because much of what has reached them, and what they considered authentic, might not come to us except through an unreliable narrator, or a defective chain, or it may not reach us at all.

3) It may have been that the hadiths reached the scholar, but he did not consider them authentic due to the narrator from

whom he received them. Even though some hadiths were well-known and famous, they might have reached many of the scholars through unreliable narrators, so they did not use these hadiths as evidence. Conversely, they may have reached other scholars through reliable narrators. Thus, it is evidence in this sense, but the scholars who obtained it through a weak narrator are excused for not using it.

4) Many of the scholars of *Ḥijāz* (the Western region of the Arabian Peninsula that includes Makkah and Madinah) did not accept the hadiths of the scholars of Iraq unless the hadith had some origin in the Ḥijāz. This is because the people of Ḥijāz believed that they were more protective of the Sunnah and that no one should contradict their hadiths.

5) The evidence may have reached the scholar but he forgot it. Ibn Taymiyyah gives two examples from the life of 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه), one of which was the famous incident when 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) wanted to limit the dowry of the women according to what the wives and daughters of the Prophet (ﷺ) received. A woman stood up and corrected him, reminding him of the verse:

﴿ ... وَءَاتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَىٰهُنَّ قِنطَارًا ... ﴿٢٠﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ٢٠)

﴿...and if you have given one of them a heap of gold...﴾
(Qur'an 4: 20)

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) changed his mind after being reminded of this verse.

6) The scholar might not know the evidence in the hadiths, such that he is unable to extract all of the rulings from it. He might have thought the Prophet (ﷺ) meant something else, or that the ruling from the hadith was meant for a specific purpose when it was really general, or vice versa.

Ibn Taymiyyah goes on to give many more examples and reasons why the scholars are excused for their mistakes and lack of knowledge or use of a hadith. Lang unfairly jumps to the conclusion that these hadiths are fabrications which were introduced later, without taking all of the above into consideration.

Another extremely important point is that if later scholars (or anyone else for that matter) wanted to fabricate a hadith in order to support a doctrine, why would they use weak narrators in their fabricated isnād, such as the case with the hadith on ijmā‘ (consensus) above? Would it not make more sense to fabricate a strong chain of narrators? These scholars were men who were extremely pious and feared quoting anything from the Prophet (ﷺ) which he had not uttered. It is highly unlikely that they did not look into all aspects of a hadith, including its content, before attributing it to the Prophet (ﷺ).

Imam Mālik took forty years to compile his Mawaṭṭa’; it is inconceivable that Imam Mālik, who worked on his book for so long, missed the statement of ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) ‘stating that the Qur’an is missing a verse’, yet Lang, who read the Muwaṭṭa’ in translation and without the background of Imam Mālik, was able to detect it. After writing the Muwaṭṭa’, Imam Mālik spent the rest of his life teaching it to many great scholars, such as Imam ash-Shāfi‘ī, al-Awzā‘ī[234] (d. 157 AH/ 774 CE) and Shaybānī. Many commentaries have been written on the Muwaṭṭa’, and it has always been studied and taught throughout the generations. Is it plausible for all of these great scholars to have missed this extremely important point (had Lang’s understanding been true) and 1,430 years later, Lang caught it while reading a translation of the work? Along with this method being unscholarly, it assumes that generations of scholars were ignorantly transmitting hadiths without scrutinising and analysing all the texts available to them.

Lang’s book was written with the intention of helping those who are newly practicing Muslims. He does a great job answering many of the questions that converts sometimes raise. However, when it comes to the subject of Hadith, he uses the wrong methodology.

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[234] Al-Awzā‘ī, Abū ‘Amr ‘Abdur Raḥmān ibn ‘Amr was a great jurist and founder of a school of law that did not survive.

A growing problem today (especially in the West) is that many converts, as well as other Muslims, tend to think that they are qualified to criticise respected scholars, to interpret texts and to give rulings; they feel that they have the right to criticise someone like Imam ash-Shāfi'ī or Mālik, or that they are able to discover (by reading a translation) why a hadith must have been fabricated, while the thousands of Hadith scholars in the past centuries have all missed it and ignorantly passed it down in a parrot-like manner. They put themselves on equal footing with the most esteemed and respected scholars, despite the fact that they have not studied even a portion of what these scholars studied. No matter how intelligent one may be, without the proper scholarly training in Islamic texts, one is not qualified to criticise them. Basing Hadith criticism on translated texts and a few books read here and there is unscholarly and contradictory to the traditional method. If it is believed that the traditional method is unreliable, the methodology of individuals, such as Lang, is even less reliable – for it lacks any structure and is based upon conjecture and subjectivity, even as flimsy and non-scientific a method as intuition. Such criticisms of opinions hold no weight and are to be rejected, especially when they contradict the opinions of superb, well-grounded, devout, God-fearing scholars.

The Prophet's Miracles

> The authenticated traditions contain numerous reports of the Prophet performing miracles – with God's permission, of course. Many of these are similar to ones attributed to Jesus in the New Testament, such as transforming small quantities of food into enough to feed a whole host of hungry followers and curing blindness with his saliva. Although the Qur'an recalls miracles of past prophets in its narratives, it identifies itself – and perhaps one other supernatural phenomenon – as the only observable miracle(s) granted to the Prophet. Moreover,

> the Qur'an states that the Prophet's opposition frequently complained that he produced no other miraculous signs. Yet if the Prophet indeed performed most of the miracles recorded in the *Hadith* literature, then it is a wonder that his opponents consistently complained of a lack of supernatural signs or that the Qur'an did not at least cite more of them in response to pagan objections.[235]

In the aforementioned quote, we see that Lang assumes that the Prophet (ﷺ) could not have had any miracle besides the Qur'an, simply because the Qur'an does not mention or cite it. Primarily, the miracles that took place such as the feeding of the many with little food, curing with his saliva, healing the sick, the tree that wailed, and the stones glorifying Allah (ﷻ) were not necessarily for the benefit of the Prophet's opposition. Rather, they were miracles for the benefit of the believers, to help increase their faith. Most, if not all, of these events took place in the presence of mostly Muslims; nevertheless, even if the disbelievers did witness them, they would have rejected them. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not need these miracles to prove his prophethood, since the Qur'an was the Prophet's main miracle. Unlike earlier Prophets, he was sent to all humankind, which means that his main miracle must be witnessed by all people at all times. Supernatural miracles are only temporary and can only be attested to by the people living at the time. Therefore, the Qur'an does not need to cite all the supernatural miracles of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ); instead, it focuses on the main and everlasting miracle which is most importantly, the Qur'an itself. Nevertheless, the Qur'an does cite at least two supernatural miracles – one of which was the splitting of the moon:

﴿ ٱقۡتَرَبَتِ ٱلسَّاعَةُ وَٱنشَقَّ ٱلۡقَمَرُ ۝١ ﴾ (سورة القمر: الآية ١)

﴾The hour has drawn near, and the moon has been cleft asunder.﴿
(Qur'an 54: 1)

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[235] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 250.

Lang cites this as 'perhaps' the one supernatural phenomenon that is mentioned in the Qur'an; he then states that some exegetes believe that this verse refers to an event having to do with the end of the world, or that it is an ancient Arabic idiom which means 'a matter has become manifest'. The majority of tafsīr scholars have stated that interpreting it as an event on the Day of Judgement or an Arabic idiom is incorrect.[236] Therefore, this verse is describing a supernatural miracle that took place during the time of the Prophet(ﷺ). The evidence are the verses that follow it:

﴿ وَإِن يَرَوْا۟ ءَايَةً يُعْرِضُوا۟ وَيَقُولُوا۟ سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ ﴿٢﴾ وَكَذَّبُوا۟ وَٱتَّبَعُوٓا۟
أَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَكُلُّ أَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ﴿٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة القمر: الآية ٢ -٣)

﴿And if they see a sign, they turn away and say: This is continuous magic.[237] They denied, and followed their own desires, and every matter will be settled.﴾ *(Qur'an 54: 2-3)*

In addition, this verse proves that Lang's argument is incorrect, for despite this supernatural miracle, the disbelievers still asked for a sign from Allah (ﷻ). Furthermore, the context of this verse indicates that it was a supernatural miracle. This chapter of the Qur'an speaks of previous nations who denied the supernatural miracles of their prophets and were destroyed as a result.

Moreover, the Qur'an establishes that previous prophets and messengers received supernatural miracles; therefore, it is not improbable that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) also received them. The Qur'an does not need to mention all the Prophet's supernatural miracles. This is because if they do not believe in the Qur'an, which is the greatest miracle, they will not believe in anything else. In other words, since they deny the Qur'an, there is no reason for the citation of lesser signs.

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[236] See for example Abū Ḥayyān's *Tafsīr al Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, ash-Shawkāni's *Fatḥ al-Taqdīr*, and al-Samarqandi's *Baḥr al-'Ulūm.* Al-Qurṭubī mentioned in his tafsīr that Ḥudhayfah used to recite this verse adding the word 'indeed': *Iqtarabat as sā'tu wa qad inshaq al qamar*

﴿The hour has drawn near and the moon has indeed been cleft asunder.﴾ *(Qur'an 54: 1)*

[237] Perhaps this is an indication that they did witness other miracles, since they state that it is 'continuous magic'.

Another miracle that the Qur'an mentions is the Prophet's night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem:

﴿ سُبۡحَٰنَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَسۡرَىٰ بِعَبۡدِهِۦ لَيۡلٗا مِّنَ ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ ٱلۡحَرَامِ إِلَى ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ
ٱلۡأَقۡصَا ٱلَّذِى بَٰرَكۡنَا حَوۡلَهُۥ لِنُرِيَهُۥ مِنۡ ءَايَٰتِنَآۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلۡبَصِيرُ ١ ﴾

(سورة بني إسرائيل: الآية ١)

﴿Glorified be He who took his slave [Muhammad] for a journey by night from *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* [at Makkah] to *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* [in Jerusalem], the land which We have blessed, in order that we might show him Our signs. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.﴾ *(Qur'an 17: 1)*

In this verse, Allah (ﷻ) makes no mention of the disbelievers and their reaction, although it was clearly a miraculous sign which took place. If these two great miracles took place and are documented by the Qur'an, then why is it so hard to believe that the Prophet (ﷺ) was given other miracles that have not been cited in the Qur'an? Merely because something has not been mentioned in the Qur'an does not mean it is not true or authentic. In fact, I am curious as to what the stance of Lang, and those with a similar methodology, would have been if the miracle of the splitting of the moon had been mentioned in Hadith literature only, and not in the Qur'an.

Finally, the verses that mention the disbelievers' demand for signs are not emphasising the lack of signs given to the Prophet (ﷺ); they are highlighting the stubbornness of the disbelievers and their refusal to recognise these miracles and signs.[238] Those who are mentally ill are unable to recognise reality even though it is all around them; similarly, the disbelievers were blind to the signs given to the Prophet (ﷺ).

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[238] See Qur'an 13: 7, Qur'an 13: 27, Qur'an 6: 37, and Qur'an 29: 50.

This methodology of extreme scepticism is very dangerous and can easily lead to removing from Islam that which is part of it, especially when accompanied with a lack of research and study of the subject. This is another example of Lang incorrectly and unfairly doubting the authenticity of certain hadiths, using only their content to judge them.

Signs of the Hour

Lang states:

> The Qur'an states that the Prophet was recurrently questioned concerning the timing of the Day of Judgment and was repeatedly commanded by God to simply reply, "Knowledge thereof belongs to God alone". In the *Hadith* records, however, the Prophet supplies numerous predictions of events that will herald its coming. Since the Qur'an is so insistent on how the Prophet should respond to these queries, I find it odd that he would offer so many details and hints about the arrival of the Hour.[239]

Lang surmises that these predictions did not take place because they would have otherwise been recorded in the Qur'an. He is again hastily jumping to conclusions with a cynical outlook toward these hadiths, without realising that the Qur'an itself speaks of signs of the hour. There is a difference between knowing the signs of the Day of Judgement and knowing its exact time. The fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) had no knowledge about the precise occasion of the hour does not mean he did not know its signs – they are two distinct items. There is no doubt that there are many weak and fabricated hadiths about the signs of the Day of Judgement, but this does not take away the worth of the authentic hadiths, and we should accept them as such. The Qur'an has stated:

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[239] Lang, *Losing My Religion,* p. 250.

﴿ فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا ٱلسَّاعَةَ أَن تَأْتِيَهُم بَغْتَةً ۖ فَقَدْ جَآءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا ۚ فَأَنَّىٰ لَهُمْ إِذَا
جَآءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرَىٰهُمْ ۝١٨ ﴾ (سورة محمد: الآية ١٨)

﴾Do they then await other than the hour that it should come upon them suddenly? But some of its indications have already come, and when it actually comes then how can they benefit then by their reminder?﴿
(Qur'an 47: 18)

This verse makes it clear that the hour has signs and indicators, some of which have already come to pass. The majority (if not all) of the scholars of tafsīr explain that this verse is speaking about the signs of the hour.[240] There are many more verses in the Qur'an that also give indications that the hour is near, such as:

﴿ ٱقْتَرَبَتِ ٱلسَّاعَةُ وَٱنشَقَّ ٱلْقَمَرُ ۝١ ﴾ (سورة القمر: الآية ١)

﴾The hour has drawn near, and the moon has been cleft asunder.﴿
(Qur'an 54: 1)

﴿ أَزِفَتِ ٱلْأَزِفَةُ ۝٥٧ ﴾ (سورة النجم: الآية ٥٧)

﴾The day of resurrection draws near.﴿ *(Qur'an 53: 57)*

﴿ ٱقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِى غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝١ ﴾ (سورة أنبياء: الآية ١)

﴾Draws near for humankind their reckoning, while they turn away in heedlessness.﴿ *(Qur'an 21: 1)*

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[240] See, for example: *Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Tafsīr al-Baghawī, Tafsīr Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr al-Alūsī, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Fatḥ al-Qadīr, Tafsīr ar-Rāzī, Tafsīr al-Lubāb lī Ibn ʻĀdil, Baḥr al-ʻUlūm lis-Samarqandī, Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī, Tafsīr an-Naṣfī, Al-Kashāf,* and *At-Taḥrīr wat-Tanwīr.*

The Qur'an has also mentioned the return of Jesus (عليه السلام) as a sign of the Day of Judgement:

﴿ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَٱتَّبِعُونِ ۚ هَـٰذَا صِرَٰطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ ﴾

(سورةزخرف: الآية ٦١)

﴾And he is [a sign for] knowledge of the hour; therefore have no doubt concerning it and follow me. This is the straight path.﴿

(Qur'an 43: 61)

The word translated as 'knowledge' in this verse is *'ilm*, which means that by the return of Jesus (عليه السلام), it will be known that the hour is near. However, there is a different recitation which reads it as *'alam*, which means a sign. Therefore, this is evidence that signs of the hour can be found in the Qur'an itself. Both of these recitations aid the interpretation that this is regarding the return of Jesus (عليه السلام) before the Day of Judgement, and that the return of Jesus (عليه السلام) is one of the signs of its approach. There are a few tafsīr scholars who interpreted this verse as referring to the Qur'an, not to Jesus (عليه السلام). However, that does not detract from our argument; in fact, it strengthens it, since it is still evidence that there are signs of the Day of Judgement.

The Qur'an has also stated about Jesus (عليه السلام):

﴿ وَإِن مِّنْ أَهْلِ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِۦ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِۦ ۖ وَيَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَـٰمَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ
شَهِيدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: الآية ١٥٩)

﴾And there is none of the people of the book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgement, he will be a witness against them.﴿ *(Qur'an 4: 159)*

Referring to the coming of Gog and Magog, the Qur'an states:

﴿ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُم مِّن كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنسِلُونَ
﴿٩٦﴾ ﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: الآية ٩٦)

﴾Until, when Gog and Magog are let loose, and they swiftly swarm from every mound.﴿ *(Qur'an 21: 96)*

It then goes on to tell us that after building a barrier over Gog and Magog, Dhul Qarnayn[241] stated:

﴿ قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّى ۖ فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّى جَعَلَهُۥ دَكَّآءَ ۖ وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّى حَقًّا ٩٨ ﴾ سورة كهف: الآية ٩٨)

﴾This is a mercy from my Lord, but when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it level with the ground, and the promise of my Lord is ever true.﴿ *(Qur'an 18: 98)*

Another instance of the Qur'an telling us about signs of the Day of Judgement is the following verse:

﴿ وَإِذَا وَقَعَ ٱلْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَآبَّةً مِّنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ ٱلنَّاسَ كَانُوا۟ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ٨٢ ﴾ (سورة نمل: الآية ٨٢)

﴾And when the word is fulfilled concerning them, We shall bring forth a beast of the earth to speak to them, [saying] that people did not have assurance in Our revelations.﴿ *(Qur'an 27: 82)*

The Prophet (ﷺ), followed by the majority of tafsīr scholars, interpreted this to be a beast that will emerge before the day of resurrection, as one of its signs. We can only conclude from these verses that the Qur'an itself speaks about signs of the hour. Hence, it is only natural for the Prophet (ﷺ), as the explainer of the Qur'an, to also have knowledge of the signs of the hour. It is true that the Qur'an commands the Prophet (ﷺ) that when he is asked about the time of the hour, he must reply by stating that only Allah (ﷻ) knows its precise details. However, his foretelling the signs of the hour (not its exact time) is totally different. Lang did not make this distinction and overlooked all these verses and their interpretations; as a result, he was led to being sceptical of the hadiths regarding the signs of the hour. This leads us to conclude that Lang either rejected the explicit as well as implicit meanings of the aforementioned verses, or he was totally unaware of them. If the latter is the case, it represents a lack of research and scholarship on his part.

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[241] A righteous ruler mentioned in *Sūrat al-Kahf*, chapter 83, verse 98.

Criticism of Those Who Transmitted Hadiths

In criticising the rijāl[242] literature, Lang states:

> It is generally agreed that Shu'ba bin al Hajjaj[243] (93 AH/ 711 CE to 160 AH/ 776 CE) and Yahya bin Sa'id al Qattan[244] (d. 198 AH/ 776 CE) were the first critics who systematically examined *isnads* and made trustworthiness of transmitters an essential condition for accepting traditions. Since Shu'ba is supposed to not have become involved in *hadith* collection until he was almost forty, this places the beginning of systematic *rijal* criticism around 130 AH/ 747 CE If this dating is accurate, then a century elapsed between the beginnings of the *isnad* system and the beginning of the full-fledged *rijal* criticism. This late development of systematic *rijal* investigation makes it difficult to have confidence in its biographical data, which began being collected long after many of the narrators had passed away.[245]

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[242] The science of *rijāl* is devoted to the studying of people found in chains of narrations, with the purpose of establishing their moral qualities and their scholarly accuracy.

[243] Shu'bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn al-Ward was given the honorific title of *Shaykh al-Islām*. He was an eminent scholar and collector of Hadith.

[244] Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd al-Anṣārī was one of the great scholars of Madinah. He died in Iraq. See Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāhīr*, no. 581, p. 105.

[245] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 214.

Lang quotes both Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqui and Juynboll, and we find that Siddiqui himself negates Lang's allegation. After listing the many great and early critics of Hadith, Siddiqui states: "Thanks to the precision and rigour of the elite of traditionists, then, the vital core of Hadith literature was preserved intact."[246] He then goes on to quote Nabia Abbot, who states:

> Deliberate tampering with either the content or the *isnāds* of the Prophet's Tradition, as distinct from the sayings and deeds of the Companions and Successors, may have passed undetected by ordinary transmitters, but not by the aggregate of the ever-watchful, basically honest, and aggressively outspoken master traditionists and *ḥadīth* critics.[247]

Siddiqui quotes many early scholars who criticised rijāl and then states:

> As a matter of fact, numerous Companions and Successors had criticized various reporters of the traditions; and Shu'ba and Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd, who are generally said to have been the first critics of the reporters, had only made special efforts with regard to their criticism.[248]

It is evident that Lang's first authority disagrees with his conclusion. Siddiqui does not state that Shu'bah (d. 160 AH/ 776 CE) and Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd (d. 143 AH/ 760 CE) were the first to make the trustworthiness of transmitters an essential condition for accepting Hadiths. In fact, he states the opposite. Not surprisingly, Lang's next authority is Juynboll, who takes numerous quotes from Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb* which state that Yaḥyā and Shu'bah were the first to scrutinise traditions.[249] The statements Juynboll quotes are in no way sufficient evidence to establish that these two scholars were the first to begin

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[246] Siddiqui, *Hadith Literature*, p. 38.
[247] Siddiqui, *Hadith Literature*, p. 8.
[248] Siddiqui, *Hadith Literature*, pp. 38-39.
[249] Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition,* p. 20.

'full-fledged' rijāl criticism. Juynboll's quotations about Shu'bah state that he was the first scholar in Iraq to scrutinise the rijāl; it does not state that he was the first ever. Moreover, the word 'first' does not necessarily mean he was literally the first. It could imply merely what Siddiqui stated, which is that they only made a special impact with regard to criticism. Juynboll quotes an account which describes Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd as the first whose statements about *jarḥ* (impugning) and *ta'dīl* (verification) were gathered. This in no way means that he was actually the first to make such claims or statements; it simply states that he was the first who had his statements gathered. Interestingly, Juynboll does not translate these statements; he only translates one statement in which Shu'ba expresses the fact that he put forth extra effort concerning criticism as compared to others. This is, in reality, his own opinion and not necessarily a fact.

On the other hand, there are many similar statements attributed to others, such as Abū Bakr (ؓ), 'Umar (ؓ), 'Alī (ؓ), Muhammad ibn Sīrīn and others. M. Al-Azami quotes the following statements:[250]

> Al-Ḥākim[251] said: Abū Bakr was the first to shield the Prophet peace be upon him from lies.
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> Ibn Ḥibbān[252] said: 'Umar and 'Alī were the first to scrutinize the *rijāl* in the narration and search for transmitters of narrations, and then people followed them in it.

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[250] Al-Azami, M. Mustafa. *Manhaj an-Naqd 'indal Muḥadithīn: Nash'atuhu wa Tārīkhuh wa Yalīhī Kitāb at-Tamyīz lil-Imām Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī an-Naysābūrī.* Saudi Arabia: Maktabat al-Kawthar, 1990, pp. 11-13.

[251] Al-Ḥākim an-Naysābūrī, Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh (d. 405 AH/ 1014 CE) was a Hadith scholar who travelled to various countries to study hadiths. He learned from about two thousand scholars. See J. Robson, *EI2*, art. *Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī.*

[252] Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Ḥibbān at-Tamimī (d. 354 AH/ 965 CE) was a Hadith scholar who travelled through many countries to obtain hadiths. See J.W. Fück, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Ḥibbān.*

> Ibn Rajab mentioned that ibn Sirīn was the first to criticize the *rijāl* and distinguish the reliable from the rest.
>
> Ya'qūb ibn Shaiba[253] said: I said to Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn,[254] do you know anyone among the successors who used to criticize the *rijāl* as ibn Sirīn did? He signaled with his head, meaning no. Ya'qūb also said: I heard 'Alī ibn al-Madīnī[255] say: We do not know anyone before Muḥammad ibn Sirīn who used to examine the aḥādīth and scrutinize the *isnād*.

M. al-Azami goes on to say:

> In reality, it cannot be completely determined as to exactly who the first person was to speak of the *rijāl* and scrutinize the *isnād*s. If ibn al-Madīnī may Allah have mercy on him, viewed that ibn Sirīn was the first to speak about *rijāl*, we find difficulty in agreeing with this statement, because there are scholars in Medina – as we already mentioned – who scrutinized *isnād*s and examined *aḥādīth*, while they were older in age and perhaps firmer in knowledge than ibn Sirīn. If we wanted to limit ibn al-Madīnī's statement to Iraq only, it would not be true, because among the critics was al-Sha'bī (19 AH-103 AH) and he was born and before ibn Sirīn (33 AH-110 AH) and died before he died and likewise al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21 AH-110 AH). And even though Sa'īd ibn Jubayr (46 AH-95 AH) and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī (47 AH-96 AH) were both born after him, they both died before him. Thus, what was mentioned about ibn Sirīn being the first is

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[253] Ya'qūb ibn Shaybah ibn 'Alī (d. 262 AH/ 875 CE) was a great Hadith scholar who lived in Baghdad and followed the Mālikī school of law.

[254] Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn ibn 'Awn al-Murrī al-Ghaṭafānī (d. 233 AH/ 847 CE) was a Hadith scholar and student of Ibn al-Mubārak. See F. Leemhuis, *EI2*, art. *Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn*.

[255] 'Alī ibn al-Madīnī Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 234 AH/ 848 CE) was one of the greatest Hadith scholars of his time, and one of Imam al-Bukhārī's teachers.

perhaps speaking about his expansion in speaking of it, not as being the absolute first.[256]

Ultimately, the examination of rijāl had begun during the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), though without doubt on a much smaller scale. In the next generations, when the number of unreliable narrators increased, the rijāl criticism also increased and developed further.

Al-Azami has some interesting observations in this regard, putting forth the parable of a society that has millions of citizens and an extremely low crime rate, while at the same time having a very small police force. Going on to further accentuate the parable, he mentions the crime-to-population ratio to being so low that there would only be one major crime in a year's time. In such a case, it is not required to hire thousands of officers to prevent robberies. Another example is a city whose size is millions of square miles, with very few people living in it and only a handful of cars in the entire city. It would be absurd to have highly sophisticated traffic lights and signs throughout the city, when people live so far from each other and use so few cars. A final example he gives is a village in Africa that has no factories. A man decides to open a factory there. It would be ridiculous to require that he follows the system, rules and regulations of factories in industrial America, which would necessitate that he purchase highly expensive equipment in order not to pollute the air. Not polluting the air in industrial nations is required and necessary; otherwise, it will have a severe impact on the health and lives of the population. This does not mean that the factory in Africa does not pollute or that the pollution output in Africa is any less detrimental to the environment and humans. However, pollution effects a densely populated environment which already has many polluting factories greater than a single factory in a sparsely populated region with no previous pollution-emitting factories.

Similarly, since there were very few unreliable narrators in the early part of Islam, the system of criticism did not need to be so developed and sophisticated.[257]

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[256] Al-Azami, *Manhaj an-Naqd*, p. 13.

[257] Al-Azami, *Manhaj an-Naqd*, p. 114.

Lang also states:

> This may account for the profusion of conflicting judgments on the reliability of transmitters that one finds in the *rijal* literature, as well as a good deal of biographical information that is hard to accept, such as the incredibly advanced ages that a great many transmitters are supposed to have reached in an era when life expectancy was rather short.[258]

Lang gives no evidence as to how the so called 'late development' of rijāl criticism is the cause of different views about the narrators. The conflicting judgements concerning certain narrators have little to do with when rijāl criticism began. Instead, it is due to the different methodologies of the Hadith scholars. Some scholars were very stringent in the criteria a narrator had to fulfill in order to be reliable, while others were more lax. Furthermore, when a narrator is accused of not being trustworthy, the scholar must state the reason. Other scholars may not consider this as a justifiable reason to put him in the category of unreliable narrators. Another reason might be that early on in his life, the narrator was reliable but as he reached old age, his memory became weaker and was no longer reliable. In addition, scholars would look into who was accusing the narrator of not being trustworthy. If it was an adherent of a rival school of thought, his criticism would be rejected or scrutinised.

Lang takes none of the above into consideration and swiftly jumps to the conclusion that different judgements about narrators are due to the unreliability of the information we have about them. Nevertheless, the scholars of Hadith have dealt with this topic quite extensively, and it is beyond the scope of this book.[259]

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[258] Lang, *Losing My Religion*, p. 214.

[259] The interested reader may refer to al-Aḥdab, Khaldūn. *Asbāb Ikhtilāf al-Muḥadithīn Darāsah Naqdīyah Muqāranah Ḥawl Asbāb al-Ikhtilāf fī Qabūl al-Aḥādīth wa Raddihā*. Jeddah: Dār as-Sa'ūdīyah lin-Nashr wat-Tawzī', 1985.

Instead of giving us evidence, Lang asks us to refer to Juynboll, who states:

> Even more so than was the case with the Successors from the other centres dealt with so far, a surprisingly large percentage of Iraqi Successors supposedly lived to such a ripe old age that I have developed the theory that lying about one's year of birth must have been common practice.[260]

Juynboll is accusing Muslim scholars, even the Companions themselves, of lying about their age. The rijāl works are filled with thousands of names, yet Juynboll gives only a handful of examples of people who lived long lives. He is certainly picking evidence in order to cast doubt on Islamic literature. Based on this one work, whose evidence is highly questionable, Lang concluded that a 'great many' transmitters lived long lives; even if they did, why instantly take the sceptical approach and doubt it? Is it inconceivable that some people live long lives? It is quite reckless that Lang is criticising rijāl literature without directly quoting a single work on rijāl. Even worse is that he is referring to Juynboll's arguments as evidence.

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[260] Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 46.

Chapter Nine

The Probabilistic Approach

In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Ṣalāḥ[261] (d. 643 AH/ 1245 CE) states:

> A narrator's control over his material (*ḍabṭ*) is known by comparing his narrations with the narrations of other sound narrators (*thiqāt*) who are known for their control over the material and meticulousness. If we find his narrations in accordance with their narrations, even if only in meaning, or we find that his narrations are mostly in accord with their narrations and rarely contradict them, then we will know that he is in control of the material and reliable. However, if we find that he often contradicts them, then we will know that he is unreliable and we will not use his ḥadīth as evidence, and God knows best.[262]

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[261] Ibn Ṣalāḥ, Taqī ad-Dīn Abū ‘Amr was one of the most eminent scholars of his time in all the branches of Hadith. See J. Robson, *EI2*, art. *Ibn Al-Ṣalāḥ*.

[262] Ibn ‘Abdur Raḥmān ash-Shahrazūrī, Abū ‘Umar wa ‘Uthmān. *Muqadimat Ibn Ṣalāḥ fī ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2003, p. 161.

Ibn Ṣalāḥ summarises for us how a narrator's reliability is determined; as we shall see, it was certainly not based on guesswork or assumption. Rather, it was based on a scientific method. Commenting on this statement of Ibn Ṣalāḥ, Iftikhar Zaman states:

> One could evaluate the skill of a hadith narrator in preserving and transmitting the words and meaning of a hadith – regardless of whether such a narrator was writing down hadiths, whether he was memorizing them, or whether he was using some entirely different method. Moreover, such an evaluation of skills is based on material which is public and currently available – it does not rely on some esoteric 'experience' of hadiths and it can even be quantified if one's tastes run in that direction.[263]

People who doubt the scientific method of Hadith criticism are from one of three groups:

1) Those who believe that it is impossible for Hadith scholars to judge the authenticity of a hadith, because doing so would be a form of claiming to know the unseen. Generally, hadiths and their narrators are in the past and it is impossible to make definite judgements regarding them.

2) Those who think that the judgement of Hadith scholars was not based on any objective or scientific method; rather, it was based on inspiration from Allah (ﷻ).

3) Those who believe that Hadith scholars had no scholarly or scientific method by which to judge hadiths; consequently, they had conflicting judgements.

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[263] Zaman, Iftikhar. "The Science of *Rijāl* as a Method in the Study of Hadiths." *Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1, 1994, pp. 1-2. In this article, the author has demonstrated how it is possible to come to sound conclusions concerning the reliability of narrators by gathering many different versions of a hadith. This further emphasises and establishes that the method of Hadith scholars was systematic and scholarly.

In his *Kitāb at-Tamyīz,* Imam Muslim[264] (d. 261 AH/ 875 CE) has replied to all these groups. He has established, through his writings and the works of other scholars, that the method of criticism used by Hadith scholars was scientific and scholarly in every sense of the word.[265] People oppose knowledge only when they have partial knowledge or mix knowledge with ignorance. Imam Muslim states:

> You, may Allah have mercy on you, mentioned that before you is a group of people who deny the saying of the scholars "this ḥadīth is erroneous and that ḥadīth is authentic, and so and so makes mistakes in his narration of a particular ḥadīth, and the opposite narration of so and so is correct". You mentioned that they exaggerate the statements of such scholars. They liken this to backbiting the righteous among the early predecessors of the past, and they even said: whoever claims the ability to differentiate their erroneous narrations from the authentic ones has spoken about that which he has no knowledge and claims to have knowledge of the unseen which he cannot attain. Know, may Allah guide us and you, that had it not been for the large amount of ignorance of the common people who deny the truth and the clearly ignorant, the superiority of the scholar over the ignorant would not have been apparent, nor the superiority of knowledge over ignorance. However, the ignorant one rejects knowledge due to ignorance being built-in him. Ignorance is the opposite of knowledge and every opposite has an opponent that will definitely repel it. Therefore do not be intimidated by the abundance of ignorant folks and their denial (of knowledge).[266]

In his work, Imam Muslim leaves no room for anyone without the proper knowledge and background themselves to criticise the methodology of Hadith scholars. He gives abundant examples of scholars criticising hadiths based on a scholarly and objective methodology. Only those who are ignorant of the science of Hadith and works of Hadith scholars, criticise their method as being unscholarly and subjective.

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[264] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī was one of Islam's outstanding early collectors of Hadith and one of its greatest Hadith scholars.

[265] Al-Azami, *Manhaj an-Naqd,* p. 19.

[266] Al-Azami, *Manhaj an-Naqd,* p. 169.

After some research, it becomes quite evident that Hadith scholars used a method based on probabilities in grading the narrators. This approach is based on a mathematical grading system, rather than simply their whims and 'intuitions'. Though probabilistic, this method is much more reliable than that of any other method, particularly the sceptical one. Imam Muslim illustrates this in his *Kitāb at-Tamyīz,* where he lists the many different approaches scholars took in order to test the reliability of narrators, among which are the following:

1) Comparison among the hadiths of different students of one scholar.

2) Comparison among statements of a single scholar at different times.

3) Comparison between oral recitation and written documents.

4) Comparison between hadiths and the related text of the Qur'an.

The great Hadith master does an excellent job of giving examples for each of the above methods; those who desire more detail should refer to his work.

The point being made here is that this approach was an objective mathematical/statistical approach, in contrast to other approaches based on superficial readings of various texts. For instance, if Imam az-Zuhrī had one hundred students, the scholars would take all of the hadiths he narrated and test his students. Using this method, they would be able to see which students had the fewest mistakes. If a student made two mistakes in narrating a thousand hadiths, he would perhaps be considered an A+ student; if another student made ten mistakes, he would be an A student; another who made more mistakes would receive a C; and the one who made even more mistakes would receive a D or an F. They obviously did not use these letters, but they did have names for those at different levels of reliability, such as *thiqā* (trustworthy), *thabt* (reliable), *mutqin* (precise), *ḍābit* (exact), *ṣadūq* (sincere), *lā baʾsa bihī* (acceptable), *ṣāliḥ al-ḥadīth* (pious regarding the Hadith), *layyin* (soft regarding the Hadith), *laysa bi qawi* (not strong), *ḍaʿīf* (weak), *matrūk* (rejected), *kadhāb* (liar), *waḍḍāʿ* (fabricator), and so forth. In comparison to the other methods which are subjective, this approach is objective and, therefore, more reliable.

Therefore, when a scholar like Bukharī, for instance, states that a particular hadith is authentic, it is not based on his intuition or guesswork. It means that for each hadith, he has memorised all its chains of narration, which sometimes can be hundreds in number. Not only this, but he knows all of the individual narrators and the levels of their reliability, as well as where they were born and lived, the lands in which they travelled, whom they met and learned from, the opinions other scholars had of them, their degree of honesty, and when they died. These are the factors a Hadith scholar looked at when judging the reliability of a hadith; it was not his favour, whim, or desire. In addition, the Hadith scholar would compare both the isnād and the matn to ensure that the hadith does not contradict a narration by someone more reliable, which again demonstrates an objective approach to grading a hadith.

Finally, it is important to point out, as al-Azami justifiably argues, that Islam is not a philosophical religion that obliges concrete evidence for everything; rather, it is an entirely practical religion. That is why we only need solid evidence when it comes to certain issues of creed, such as belief in Allah (ﷻ), the hereafter, the messengers, and so on. For everything else, highly probable evidence suffices.

It is not only Islam that uses probable evidence; all aspects of life are based on it as well. If we needed certainty in every aspect of living, life would not go on. People would claim others as their parents, a husband would claim the baby of his wife as his and so on. However, if we look at it from a logical standpoint, what kind of logical evidence do we have that their claims are true? We cannot verify that the wife did not cheat on the husband, nor can we be certain that the baby was not mistakenly swapped with another, even though these are rare cases. Based on these rare cases, do people generally doubt the legitimacy of their children or parents? What would life be like if we demanded certainty in everything? We read in newspapers that people get poisoned by their food and die. How do we know that the food presented to us is not poisoned? Since we have no concrete evidence that our food is not poisoned, should we now doubt all the food that comes before us, and therefore completely avoid it? This is not something normal people require, let alone scholars. Likewise, there is a possibility that a reliable and trustworthy narrator could make a mistake in narrating a hadith; however, this should not cause us to doubt every narration and narrator.[267]

The logic of rejecting authentic hadiths because their grades are based on a probabilistic system is not scholarly for a number of reasons. If we began to accept only what was known without any doubt, this would lead us to not only reject authentic hadiths based on the possibility (albeit a small one) of them being unauthentic, but also of accepting weak or rejected hadiths because there remains a very slight possibility of them being authentic. This line of reasoning does not work and would lead to chaos if applied to everything in life.

This establishes the system of Hadith scholars to be the most scholarly, reliable, and objective way of judging hadiths. Hadith rejectors and sceptics rely only on their personal tastes and partiality when judging hadiths, claiming to know better than Hadith scholars, yet they are unable to provide a better system for judging hadiths.

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[267] Al-Azami, *Manhaj an-Naqd,* p. 115.

Conclusion

As touched upon earlier, some of the Hadith rejectors seem to be concerned about the perceived lack of human rights, and women's rights in particular, in the Muslim world. I agree that the current state of affairs of the Muslims worldwide is often not as it should be. Hadith rejectors should remember, however, that in the first millennium or so of Islamic history, Muslims created societies where human rights and justice flourished, where women were not only beloved mothers but also played an important role in public life. The heroes of Islamic history embraced the Sunnah, and this helped rather than hindered their quest to build successful, advanced communities. Muslims are currently at a historic low-point. The solution to our problems is not to destroy the Sunnah, but rather to strive for the correct understanding of Islam, free of ignorant interpretations.

The Qur'an commands us not to speak about that of which we have no knowledge. Everyone will be held accountable for every word uttered, especially when speaking about the religion. Those who reject one or all hadiths will have to stand before Allah (ﷻ) and account for what they said. It is quite disturbing that we see Muslims who speak about what the Prophet (ﷺ) could or could not have said, based on their feelings and intuitions. The Prophet (ﷺ) severely warned people not to lie about him. Alleging that a hadith is not the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ) when it is, is just as monstrous as claiming that a hadith is his saying when it is not – especially when the conclusion is based on partial information and lack of research. Those who do this will have to face Allah (ﷻ) and account for spreading untrue information about His messenger. They will carry the burden of their statements. Having the audacity to reject Hadith, based on a lack of information, is similar to lying about the Prophet (ﷺ) when the hadith is authentic.

To the early scholars, Hadith science was not simply a worldly science like mathematics, history, or sociology; it was part of the religion. Therefore, their attitude towards it was not like one's attitude towards a scientific formula. If one makes a mistake in psychology or mathematics, the consequences are not so significant. However, if one makes a mistake in hadith because of negligence, insufficient research or insincere learning, then he or she will carry the burden of meeting Allah (ﷻ) after having indulged in talking about it while not properly equipped in that discipline.

The path Lang takes is not limited to him; it is also being pursued by a growing number of Muslims who read a couple of works on Hadith and then feel they have the authority to criticise it. People who write a few books here and there are unfortunately raised to the status of scholars. They begin criticising and casting doubts on the conclusions of giants in the field of Hadith like Bukharī and Muslim; it is especially saddening when such criticisms are based on translations. As Muslims, we must not give such opinions any scholarly weight.

Ultimately, the modern Hadith rejecters differ from those of the past because they do not merely deny the Hadith; they reject the authority of the Sunnah as well. We do not have any records of Muslims completely rejecting the authority of the Sunnah. There were groups who rejected hadiths based on the method of transmission; however, it was not because they believed that the Prophet's sayings lacked authority. If we are expected to suppose that all the Muslims could have corrupted Islam by introducing the hadith, then by extension, we must also conclude that it was very likely for them to have corrupted the Qur'an as well.

Throughout Islamic history, any group that completely rejected Hadith did not last long. Those that are living today will die off tomorrow. However, it is our duty as Muslims to speak out and show the errors of such heretic sects instead of waiting for time to take its toll on such groups. The Muslim nation is in agreement that after the Prophet's death, the only way to fulfil the Qur'an's command to obey the Prophet (ﷺ) is through following the Hadith. Those who claim otherwise cannot stand for long because their arguments will collapse from the pressure of the overwhelming evidence against them.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) received two forms of revelation: a verbatim revelation (the Qur'an) and a non-verbatim revelation (the Sunnah). Anyone who rejects one form of revelation received by the Prophet (ﷺ) rejects all of them. The Qur'an and Hadith go hand in hand, and one cannot be taken without the other. If the Hadith is rejected, the Qur'an becomes a book that anyone can interpret according to his or her wishes. There are many commands found in the Qur'an whose details can only be found in the hadiths. When one rejects Hadith, one faces countless obstacles when it comes to the basic rituals of Islam such as how to pray, fast, and pay zakāh. The Prophet (ﷺ) was sent as a teacher and guide for all people of all times. His mission was not simply to recite the Qur'an. The Qur'an refers to the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) in the following verse:

﴿ لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلْيَوْمَ ٱلْآخِرَ
وَذَكَرَ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ٢١ ﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: الآية ٢١)

﴾You have in the Messenger of Allah a noble model for all whose hopes are in Allah and the last day and who remember Allah much.﴿
(Qur'an 33: 21)

Taking the Messenger as a model is the evidence of one's belief in Allah (ﷻ) and the last day. Whoever's hope is in Allah (ﷻ) and the last day, their way of achieving success is through taking the Prophet (ﷺ) as an example. If they do not have hope in Allah (ﷻ) and the last day, they will not take the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as a model. Muslims should follow the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) in all facets of life. His deeds were approved by Allah (ﷻ) as an excellent example for all Muslims until the end of time. For a Muslim, no distinction can be made between the commands of Allah (ﷻ) and the commands of the Prophet (ﷺ). Indeed, our attitude towards the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) may be summarised in one verse:

﴿ وَمَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَىٰكُمْ عَنْهُ فَٱنتَهُوا۟ ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
شَدِيدُ ٱلْعِقَابِ ﴿٧﴾ ﴾ (سورة حشر: الآية ٧)

﴾…And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it, and keep your duty to Allah; verily Allah is severe in reprimand.﴿ *(Qur'an 59: 7)*

The Qur'an demands that we respect, honour and revere the Prophet (ﷺ):

﴿ لِّتُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٩﴾ ﴾

(سورة الفتح: الآية ٩)

﴾So that you may believe in Allah and His Messenger and may aid him and revere him…﴿ *(Qur'an 48: 9)*

The sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) deserve the same reverence and respect as he does. Rejecting his sayings and giving them no importance is equal to rejecting him. Belief in the Prophet (ﷺ) is not only to believe in his bodily existence, but his sayings and deeds as well.

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Glossary of Islamic Terms[*]

āḥād	آحاد	a category of hadith describing narrations that are related by one or two narrators who in turn related it from one or two narrators until the chain ends at the Prophet (ﷺ), or a narration that is related by a group of narrators who constitute a number that is still fewer than the minimum requirement for the mutawātir narration
Ahl al-Ḥadīth	أهل الحديث	'people of the Hadith'
Allāhu akbar	الله أكبر	Allah is the Greatest

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[*] The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (that is, is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

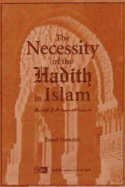
āthār	آثار	*lit.* remains, traces: all narrations, regardless of whether they are related from the Prophet (s), from the Companions, or from the tābi'ūn
dhikr Allāh	ذكر الله	remembrance of Allah; specifically, remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him
ẓuhr	ظهر	afternoon; the obligatory prayer at that time
īmān	إيمان	faith; belief in all the six pillars of the creed of Islam
Eid ('īd)	عيد	*lit.* festival; the two celebrations: one at the end of Ramadan and the other at the culmination of the Hajj
fiqh	فقه	Islamic jurisprudence; understanding or interpreting Islamic law
Hadith (ḥadīth)	حديث	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
hadith (ḥadīth)	حديث	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers

Hajj (ḥajj)	حج	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Ka‘bah at Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his/her lifetime
Ḥijāz	حجاز	the Western region of the Arabian Peninsula that includes Makkah and Madinah
Hijrah	هجرة	migration: *esp*. the migration from Makkah to Madinah by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and his Companions that marks the start of the Islamic calendar
iḥrām	إحرام	the state of consecration for Hajj or ‘umrah; the special clothing worn by the pilgrim in such a state
jihad (jihād)	جهاد	struggle or striving (in Allah's cause)
jinn (plural of *jinni*)	جن	non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as 'demons' or 'devils'; They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers; some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some people try to 'foretell' the future by contacting a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead

		people into thinking that they can tell them what will happen in the future, near or far, or that the jinn can provide people with riches or some sort of power.
Kaaba (*Ka‘bah*)	الكعبة	the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl, and which Muslims face wherever they pray
maghrib	مغرب	sunset; the obligatory prayer at that time
majhūl	مجهول	(lit. unknown); a narrator of hadith who does not have at least two reliable people transmitting from him or her
al-Masjid al-Aqṣā	المسجد الأقصى	the ‘Farthest Mosque’, mentioned in the Qur’an (17: 1)
al-Masjid al-Ḥarām	المسجد الحرام	the Sacred Mosque in Makkah where the Kaaba is situated
matn	متن	text, or content, of a hadith
mursal	مرسل	a category of hadith: a narration that a tābi’ī ascribes to the Prophet(s) without mentioning the Companion from whom he took it
mutawātir	متواتر	a category of hadith describing narrations that are related by a group of upright and trustworthy

		narrators who also related from a group of upright and trustworthy narrators, and so on, until the narration ends at the Prophet (ﷺ)
qīrāṭ	قيراط	lit. an amount of gold weighing 3 kg (carat); figuratively, the 'measurement' of a reward from Allah
qibla (qiblah)	القبلة	the bearing from the Kaaba to any point on Earth; the direction that all Muslims must face in prayer
rijāl	رجال	(*lit.* men); the study of those who transmitted hadiths, to determine their moral character and accuracy, as well as biographical details about when and where they lived, who they met with, and so on
ṣaḥīḥ	صحيح	a grade of hadith: sound or authentic
ṣalāt or *ṣalāh*	صلاة	formal prayer: a combination of physical postures, recitation and supplication
sanad (isnād)	إسناد	the chain of narration through which a hadith can be traced back to the Prophet (ﷺ)
shaykh	شيخ	teacher, mentor; scholar
shirk	الشرك	associating partners with Allah

sūrah or *sūrat*	سورة	chapter of the Qur'an
Sunnah	سنة	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
tābi'ūn (sg. *tābi'ī*)	التابعون	'Successors'; those who knew or met any of the Companions and transmitted hadiths from them
tafsīr	تفسير	exegesis: commentary, or explanation of the meanings (*usu.* of Qur'anic verses)
tajwīd	تجويد	rules of pronunciation and intonation for reciting the Qur'an
zakāt *(zakāh* or *zakāt)*	زكاة	obligatory charity: an 'alms tax' on wealth payable by Muslims and to be distributed to other Muslims who qualify as recipients



The Necessity of the Hadith in Islam

Emad Hamdeh

There was a time when the notion of Hadith rejection was inconceivable. Sad to say, it is now becoming a widespread phenomenon in many countries. The educated and the ignorant, veteran Muslims and reverts, the middle class as well as the elite are falling prey to the misleading ideas projected by the Hadith rejecters through books and other forms of publication. The Internet has, unfortunately, given them a new and effective platform.

Emad Hamdeh has taken up the task of replying to these Hadith rejecters with sound and convincing arguments. *The Necessity of the Hadith in Islam* not only explains the need for the Hadith and the Sunnah at all times, but also presents and refutes the main arguments put forward by Hadith rejecters. Furthermore, Hamdeh has profiled the top few Hadith rejecters and summarised their ideas.

This is a well-researched, well-referenced and comprehensive work, which provides useful information to those seeking more knowledge on the subject. It will also sufficiently answer many different questions which come to mind after reading some of the arguments of the Hadith rejecters. Muslims today need to read works such as these to ensure that they are not misled, especially through the Internet.

About the author

Emad Hamdeh did his B.A. in World History from William Paterson University. He has also achieved an M.A. in Islamic Studies and a graduate certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy from the Hartford Seminary in the US. Hamdeh is currently a PhD candidate at Hartford Seminary.

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